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EIGHT MONTHS IN AN OX-WAGGON

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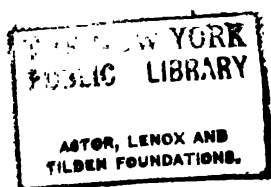
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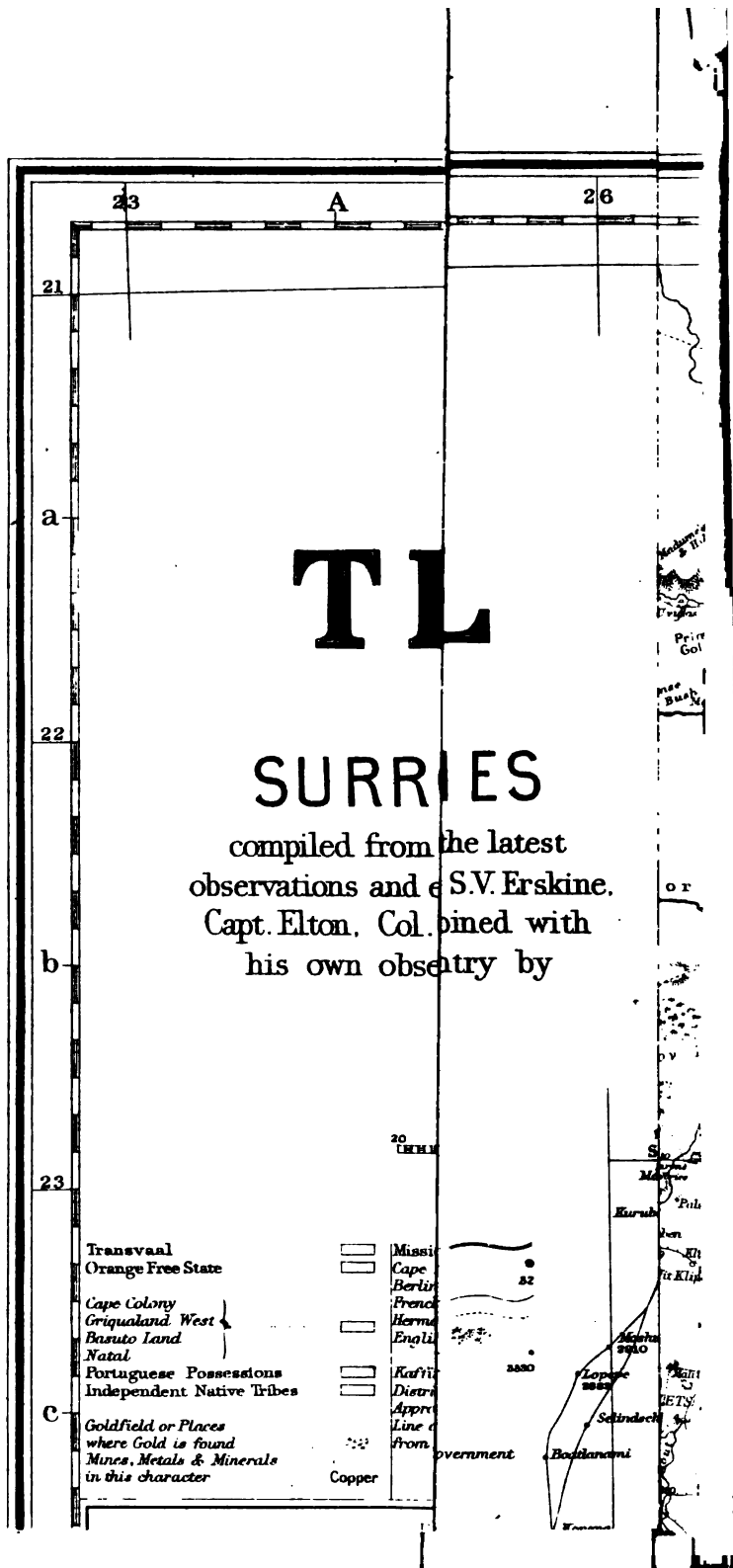
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REMINISCENCES OF BOER LIFE.

BY

E. F. SANDEMAN.

WITH A MAP.

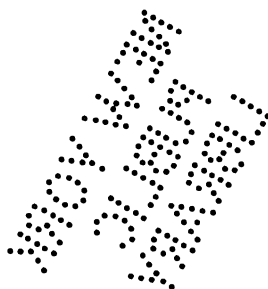
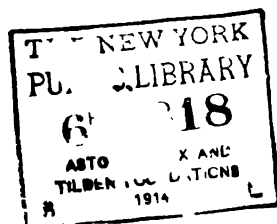


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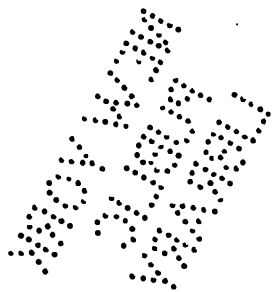
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DEDICATED TO
MY FATHER,
FOR WHOSE AMUSEMENT
THE FOLLOWING PAGES
WERE ORIGINALLY WRITTEN.



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EIGHT MONTHS IN AN OX-WAGGON.

CHAPTER I.

From London to Cape Town—The rival Routes—Disembarking
—The Masonic Hotel—The inhabitants—Cape Town by
night—Mosquitoes and their victims.

ALL sea voyages bear such a close resemblance to each other, and their details are so familiar, that I shall not describe my very commonplace passage in the Walmer Castle from the London Docks to Cape Town.

The average time of the passage is now three weeks from either Dartmouth or Southampton. This we exceeded by three days, but were more than recompensed for the delay by staying long enough at Madeira and St. Helena to enable us to see all that is worth seeing on both islands.

Before Mr. Donald Currie started an opposition line of steamers, the Union Company had a complete monopoly of the Cape traffic. Thirty to thirty-five days were then considered an excellent passage, and the fare was 60*l.*; it is now only 30*l.*, and taking into account the length of time spent on board, and the accommodation given, it is without any exception the cheapest rate of any lines in the world.

Each of the rival companies has its staunch adherents, who will recognize no short-comings in their favourite, and see no good thing in the opposition ; but taking the newest and best ships of both lines in comparison, they are all so well found that there is no reason to give either one or other the precedence in comfort or speed.

The fastest time on record made by either company is eighteen days nineteen hours, but this again has been greatly shortened by the splendid ships of the Orient Line, which now stop at the Cape to coal on their road to Australia.

Early on the morning of March 6th, 1878, Table Mount was sighted, and when we came up for the usual stroll before breakfast, it stood out bold and clear ahead of us, although still forty miles distant. At the close of a long voyage there is a feeling almost of regret that it is over, particularly amongst those coming *from* home, whether it is pleasure or necessity that has brought them away. The constant monotonous life has in itself a certain charm after a time, and ships' regulations, although disagreeable at first, are hardly regarded as an inconvenience after the first few days of settling down are over. Then on board there is such an utter absence of the necessity for thought as to one's personal comfort. Everything is done for one, there is no settling hours or ordering meals, or even thinking about what there is to do or be done, because it is exactly the same day after day.

During the last few hours of the voyage these feelings beset every one more or less, and in spite of eager longings for land again, and to begin the new

life, it needs a struggle to rouse up to the necessity of again trusting to oneself for everything, and to make all arrangements for the disembarkation.

Nothing would awaken one sooner, however, from such lazy, dreamy feelings than the surroundings a stranger is suddenly thrown amongst, when the ship at last makes fast to the wharf at Cape Town.

In an instant the decks are crowded by a rush of people who combine every colour, race, occupation, and business under the sun. Friends and relations, to meet those who are returning home. Loafers, some come down on the chance of meeting acquaintances, but more because they have nothing better to do, and will get the first news from home. Touts of every class for the different hotels, from the man who, dressed most fashionably, begins the conversation by giving news of the war, but soon turns to the excellent accommodation afforded by his particular hotel, to the man who, addressing himself chiefly to the steerage passenger, offers to carry off the luggage on his own back to the inn he recommends. Large black men, yellow men, brown men, red men, and mixed colour men frantically offering to bear away luggage, with small black, yellow, brown, and red boys running in and out between their or our legs, with papers and fruit for sale, or only on the chance of annexing to themselves any small article of passengers' luggage unperceived in the general confusion. Hansom drivers who are all half-castes, parsees, or niggers, yelling their readiness to be hired, fruit-vendors and men with drinking-carts calling attention to their wares, sailors and porters hustling and

halloaing their way through the crowd, passengers vainly trying to keep their luggage together and within sight, make such a Babel of voices and noise that one might easily imagine the world's lunatic asylum had suddenly broken loose and was rushing on board.

However, at last, with the assistance—for I was then an invalid—of my friend and cabin-mate, a stalwart Highlander, who scattered the crowd of coolies and kaffirs right and left, together with a few coloured porters specially retained, we deposited ourselves with all our goods and chattels in a couple of Hansoms, and were soon on our way to the Masonic Hotel. The custom-house officials let us pass without opening our luggage, on our assuring them that we had no guns, pistols, wine, jewellery, or tobacco in our possession, and it was with no small sense of relief that we presently found ourselves located in large airy, clean rooms in the front of the hotel, and looking out upon the market-place with the sea visible beyond.

The town is utterly unlike anything to be seen in Europe. No two houses are alike, from one end to the other. Next to a large warehouse two or three stories high, built of bricks or stone, comes a small canteen of galvanized iron, then a jeweller's shop with plate-glass windows, and a show inside which would not disgrace Bond-street, between which and perhaps, a handsomely-built bank or fine office lies a small greengrocer's or tumble-down tobacconist's. But far more strikingly novel to a stranger's eye are the men, women, and children who throng the streets.

First there passes us a well-built kaffir, with no covering to his head but its native wool, clad in an old pair of 78th Highlander trews, and wearing, as a coat, a sack with slits cut for the arms and head. Behind him come two celestials, hand in hand, and wearing the invariable blue smock-frocks and straw hats; their pigtails carefully coiled up under their hats to avoid the too particular attention of the kaffirs, who find the dangling pigtail almost irresistible. Jostling the Chinamen are a couple of Boer farmers who have probably brought their waggons loaded with fruit, corn, and vegetables, to the Cape Town market. They are tall lanky fellows, their faces sallow and much sun-burnt, and they have long, sandy-coloured hair reaching down their necks. As they slouch past, dressed in brown velveteen trousers and coats, with broad-brimmed soft felt hats on their heads, and pipes in their mouths, we catch a few words of a guttural language which sounds much like German. Close behind follow their "vraws," dressed entirely in black, with thick black veils and large black poke bonnets which quite prevent our seeing what their faces are like. As their arms are full of paper parcels, we presume that they have been shopping, and investing their good-men's market-money in town delicacies and new fashions for their homes far up in the country. Next come a couple of decidedly well-to-do-looking merchants in long grey silk coats and white hats, who stop to speak to a small group of officers, dressed in the ordinary tweed shooting-clothes, but with helmets on their heads. Two Parsee washerwomen

with large bundles of clothes, a few soldiers in their red coats and helmets, here and there a sailor ashore from one of the men-of-war in harbour, are the more striking figures among a crowd of people who all seem to think it is too hot for much exertion, and do not hurry themselves as they walk along the shady sides of the streets.

Hansoms are the chief means of conveyance, or else two-horse broughams. The horses are remarkably good ones for their work. Looking down a long line, I did not notice a single broken-down screw, such as one passes a dozen of during a stroll of 100 yards along any street in London. Most of them are barbs, about fourteen hands in height or even under, but showing a good deal of breeding. We had not much time to inspect the town, as dinner was at 6.30, and we returned to our hotel with capital appetites for the very good dinner which was served up to us at the table-d'hôte. Thick soup, fried snook, cutlets with tomatoes, a haunch of bok, dignified by the name of venison, saddle of mutton, chickens, ducks, stewed pears, tarts, rice pudding, and, for desert, a large assortment of water-melons, grapes, peaches, and nuts, was the menu. The snook is a large fish rather resembling a pike in appearance but far superior to it in flavour; it takes the place of our sole in Cape Town, as it is always in season, and is equally good for breakfast, luncheon, and dinner.

After dinner most of those who had come from on board ship went off to the theatre. I preferred sitting outside on the stoop of the hotel, and enjoying a quiet cigar and a cup of excellent coffee, and

found plenty of amusement in watching the strange and novel figures passing by, or occasionally stopping in groups to chat and gossip, as by degrees the various shops and warehouses put out their lights leaving only the street-lamps, which were few and far between, to illuminate the town.

When we landed in the afternoon the thermometer registered 98° in the shade of the house, but after dinner the mercury went down to 50°, which enabled us to obtain a refreshing sleep before the heat of another day began. On turning in I luckily did not neglect the precaution of sprinkling insect-powder over the sheets and bed-clothes, and smearing my hands, neck, feet, and face with a mixture of rosemary and turpentine. In consequence I was the only one of the new arrivals who appeared next morning at the breakfast-table unharmed by the attacks of various flying, hopping, and crawling insects which constitute one of the most serious annoyances consequent upon living in a hot climate. After a continued residence in a country infested by mosquitoes, a man's whole system gets so inoculated with the poison that their sting has no painful effect whatsoever, and scarcely leaves any mark. The fact that after a few years the sting does not, as a rule, cause any annoyance is sometimes put down to the blood of a resident in tropical climates becoming naturally so thin, that the mosquito can suck it out without inserting any of the poison it uses to thin the thick blood of a new arrival, and enable it to make a meal. The new comer, on the other hand, has all the advantage on

his side in being able to withstand the intense heat, and in bearing up against its enervating effect. Over and over again I have seen residents, and even natives, almost prostrate in the middle of the day, when a new arrival was quite bright and energetic. But after a few months the effect becomes apparent, all energy seems gradually to be sucked out of a man, and he succumbs by degrees to the general listlessness which at first has so much surprised him, and he himself joins in the chorus, which always greets the new comer's energetic action and indifference to heat, of "Wait till you have been out here as long as I have, and see how you will like it then."

CHAPTER II.

Wynberg—Rathfelder's Hotel—The Suburbs of Cape Town—
Jacobus—An afternoon ride—Constantia—Vineyards and
wines—History of a loaf of bread—Servants.

THE first advice a stranger receives on reaching Cape Town is to quit it as soon as possible; and alarming are the stories he hears on all sides of hot nights, when sleep is out of the question, of sou'-westers during which the very paving stones perform aërial flights, and the atmosphere is thick with pebbles, sand, and red dust; the latter, he is informed, likely to cause numberless lung complaints to a man even in strong health, and out of the question for an invalid to withstand. But even more deadly and dangerous than hot nights and sou'-westers are the pestilential vapours which steal over the town during the nights, caused by the very insufficient sanitary arrangements.

Very few of the residents who can afford to do otherwise live in Cape Town itself, except professional men, who are obliged to be near at hand, and in the midst of their business or practice. The whole road between Wynberg and Cape Town is lined with pretty and comfortable little villas with from one to thirty acres of land laid out in plantations and ornamental gardens round about them. The railway runs through them, and there are stations every one or two miles. Here

reside nearly all the upper ten of Cape Town society, and a very pleasant society it is.

Following the advice of numerous friends, therefore, I moved my quarters to Wynberg, some six miles out of the town, and with train communication every hour of the day.

There were three hotels at Wynberg, two close to the station, which was full when I was there, and another two miles further on, by name Rathfelder's, not such a large house as the other two, but with a far prettier view, and more open situation.

Rathfelder's Hotel, kept by Bauser, is regarded, and I think justly, as situated in the most healthy spot anywhere about Cape Town. It is just on the skirt of the pine-woods which completely shut in the other two hotels, and always has a current of fresh, cool sea-air blown to it through a pass in the hills opposite the house. Behind the hotel is a plantation of seventy acres, and behind that the veldt stretches away for miles, radiant with every sort of brilliant-coloured heath and tinted grasses, with here and there a small clump of sugar-bushes.

This hotel also has the advantage of a very large and well-stocked fruit-garden, abounding in figs, peaches, apricots, grapes, apples, pears, tomatoes, and loquots, in which the visitors of the hotel are welcome to wander and pick as much fruit as they please; a permission which very few fail to avail themselves of. The only objection to Rathfelder's, and I dare say it applies greatly to all other hotels in the neighbourhood, is that flies, in almost incredible numbers, swarm through the building. The doors,

walls, tables, and ornaments are literally black with them, and Hans Andersen's, tailor, who killed "nine at a blow," might, if he came to Wynberg, change the boast on his shield by the addition of an 0. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the house-flies clear the premises of blow-flies and mosquitoes, which are even a worse pest. At Rathfelder's there were not any of the usual occupants of one's bed-clothes, and the application of insect-powder was therefore quite superfluous.

It is worth a visit to Rathfelder's to make the acquaintance of the old waiter there, by name Jacobus, the most extraordinary character I have ever met with. Half Hottentot, half Dutch, he has in ugliness retained the most characteristic features of the two races, but, on the other hand, has twice the intelligence of either one or other of his own station. He is a strict conservative, but still utterly independent of all authority, and refuses to break through any of what he considers the established custom of the house on any consideration, and does not even willingly obey the proprietor himself.

His constant lament is the good old days of the Anglo-Indians, now, alas! long gone. Then the Cape was worth living in, the best of everything was in abundance, and every one had plenty of money to pay for it. He takes every opportunity of airing his views on politics and affairs in general, and has no hesitation in keeping the whole table-d'hôte waiting for their pudding while he sets them right in their opinions, or gives them information on the relation

between the Government and the various races of South Africa, or how best to manage a frontier defence.

He also has a grievance to air in the shape of an unsuccessful lawsuit, and most openly avows his intention of shooting the iniquitous (?) judge who decided against him, just because (he says) he is a poor old black-man.

The cuisine at Rathfelder's is not as extensive as it might be, and consists in roast leg of mutton and hot custard pudding for dinner one day, and boiled leg of mutton and cold custard pudding the next; that at least was the principal change I observed while staying there.

As the proprietor had informed me that he always kept excellent horses on hire for the benefit of his guests, I determined to ride up the hills opposite, which looked very lovely, glistening in the sun, with thickets of silver-trees growing up their sides, and from there get a view of the surrounding country. After lunch, my steed—known as "The Blue," from a very extraordinary tinge of that colour which distinguished it from an iron grey—was brought up, and I set off on my ride, not paying much attention where I wandered, as I was assured the horse had been ridden from time immemorial over the whole neighbourhood, and that he knew his way home again even after dark. I made my way by degrees up the sides of the hills, picking, as I rode along, some of the leaves of the silver-trees lining my path, and which, dried, make very tasteful book-markers. On the top I dismounted and sauntered

about for some time, plucking heaths and flowers, which there grew in abundance, before I started off again. On the side of the hill a well-beaten track marked out the road, but, when once on the level, the track disappeared altogether, and I rode on in the direction I knew the hotel to be, until I found myself in rather a fix, for straight ahead of me was a long line of thick and high sugar-bushes which had quite recently been fired, and, as far as I could see, there was no path through them. However, remembering the advice I had been given about the "Blue," I threw the reins on his neck, and left him to follow his own route home. Straightway he plunged into the charred brushwood, and presently I found myself in a most unpleasant condition, for the black came off the burnt twigs like tar, and the further I proceeded the thicker the bush grew. However, it was of no use going back, so I forced my way ahead, and after a good deal of rather painful and very dirty buffeting, found myself on the other side, black from head to foot, torn, scratched, and bruised, but very far out of the direction of the hotel. However, I was now able to see about me again, and following well-known land-marks, was soon back in the direct road, so it did not make much difference, and my cerulean steed had to pay for his stupidity by an extra quick gallop, most unwillingly performed, to get me back in time for a bath and dinner.

I resolved most firmly never again to trust to the sagacity of an African horse, and I never did, so perhaps the early lesson was worth the little discomfort I paid as the price of it.

Rathfelder's hotel is connected with the owners of one of the Constantia vineyards, so has a better quality of colonial wines than I ever met with in any but a private house elsewhere. The wine known by the name of Constantia is too sweet and strong for anything but a liqueur and in that capacity, it is very pleasant to the taste, and far less injurious than the ordinary curaçao or chartreuse. The best known Cape wine is Pontac, resembling in taste and colour a rough-edged, strong port wine. The finest qualities of this wine are excellent, but the price is very high, and the cheaper qualities are very inferior.

There are other wines known as, Burgundy, Sherry, Hermitage, and Hock, but, except in colour, they have nothing in common with the wines they are named after. I believe that one great reason of the little success of Cape wines lies in their names, for the buyer of Sherry or Hock naturally expects a close imitation in flavour, and instead, finds that the Hocks are as strong as Spanish Sherries, and the Sherry is a sweet and fiery liqueur, so he is at once disappointed in the wine, and condemns them wholesale.

There are no manufactories of any importance anywhere in South Africa, every article of consumption is imported from England or America: latterly the Americans have taken a very large share of the trade, as their waggons, carriages, and machinery are found to stand the rough roads and dry atmosphere better than the British, and their tinned provisions and soft goods are equal in quality, and at the same time are brought to market at a cheaper rate.

Very large quantities of Australian flour are used, and there is a well-established trade between the two colonies, sugar and coffee being given in exchange for grain. America has even supplied mealies, as Indian corn is called all over Africa, in very large quantities the last few years.

A loaf of bread in Cape Town has a curious history, and rather an instructive one.

Imported seed is sown in land prepared by foreign-made ploughs, drawn by oxen with foreign-made chains. When ripe, the corn is cut with imported sickles, and threshed with imported engines, which are worked by imported coal. The grain is taken to market in imported sacks, and perhaps carried in an American waggon. The machinery for bread-making is imported and worked by imported labour, and then the bread is very probably and very naturally undersold in the market by an article decidedly superior in look and taste, though not as wholesome, made from the directly imported Australian flour.

The prices of everything, from a common ready-made shirt at 15s. to a bottle of beer at 2s. 6d., strike a stranger as most exorbitant. The traders, however, put it all down to heavy customs-duties and bad debts; the losses from the latter are so heavy, that they often far more than counterbalance the seemingly enormous profits. I was charged fourteen shillings for 100 visiting cards, and that did not entitle me to the plate. An ordinary box of biscuits costs 2s. 6d.; a pot of pickles the same price. Medicine in a stoppered bottle costs an extra 9d., to

defray the customs-duties on glass and extra risk in carriage.

However, these exorbitant charges served as some slight preparation for those we afterwards had to pay up country, and prevented our feeling as horror-struck as we should otherwise have felt at some of the demands made upon us during the next eight months' wanderings.

But in spite of high prices, hot weather, and dearth of servants, I think no one can help being charmed with Cape Town, its environs, and its society. Large entertainments are almost out of the question from the absolute impossibility of obtaining servants; but they make up for it by innumerable small gatherings, which are productive of far more pleasure and amusement. Hardly a white man as an indoor servant is to be met with, and good servants are at a premium; cooks, however plain, receive their 50*l.* a year. It is very little use either bringing servants out from England. If a man comes, he will use the very first money he receives as wages to pay his way to the Diamond Fields, which are the El-Dorado of South Africa; or he will stay until he can collect a small capital, and will then set up for himself as a publican, small store-keeper, or winkler.* If it is a maid who comes, she is sure to leave her mistress, and be married; and if she be good-looking, will very likely go before she has

* A winkler is generally a man who sells the goods of others on commission, and either keeps a small up-country store, or hawks them about from farmstead to farmstead with a waggon and oxen.

been out three months. There is now a law which makes it possible for a master or mistress to bind down a servant for three years, provided a contract is re-signed as soon as the servant disembarks ; but in practice it does not put the masters in a much better position, for a man can so very easily get away from the consequences of breaking his agreement in a country where there is little telegraph and less railway. The woman is still better off, for if she marries, the husband is not liable for his wife's debts, and the woman cannot be imprisoned for her own breach of contract.

Coolies and Chinese form the staple element from which the domestic servants are drawn ; and, indeed, as cooks they far surpass the ordinary white woman, who has probably never cooked anything but her husband's dinner till she advertises as "good plain cook" in the *Cape Town Daily News*.

CHAPTER III.

Plans for the Journey—The Air of the Transvaal—Our Guides—Scares from the Front—Scarcity of Information—Cape Town Museum—From Cape Town to Durban—On board the "Melrose"—East London—Volunteers—The Bars—Landing at Durban.

DURING the voyage out we had passed away many an hour listening to narratives and anecdotes of sport, travel, and life in the interior, from old hunters and traders on board who were returning to the colony. At first I used to listen with feelings of intense interest and wonder; but gradually these feelings gave way to envy, and a wish to see for myself some of the strange sights, to lead the same free, wild, half-civilized life, and experience the excitements and vicissitudes of fortune which they spoke of with such enthusiasm, evidently themselves considering to be the only life worth living. My friend A. was smitten with the same indefinite sort of longing, and by degrees we began to talk it all over between ourselves, as more and more within the range of possibilities that we too might manage some sort of expedition into the interior, for time was not of great importance to either of us. Our rather wild ideas on the subject took a more practical form, when an ex-trader who was returning to the colony offered for a certain con-

sideration, to acilitate matters by procuring our waggons, oxen, horses, servants, provisions, and in fact all things necessary for such an expedition as we proposed, having sport for its chief aim and object.

As I myself had left England to recruit my health, I could not make agreement of any sort until I had, at the Cape itself, learnt fuller particulars, and had the statement of our proposed conductor and guide confirmed. I also desired professional advice as to the advisability of my attempting a journey which, under its most favourable aspects, could not be otherwise than accompanied with a very considerable amount of roughing it, hardships, and privations.

Accordingly, my first business after landing was to call on my friend Dr. Biccard, to whom I stated my circumstances. After a most searching examination, to my great delight, and I must say astonishment, he informed me that it was the very plan of all others calculated to restore my health, for the air of the Transvaal was almost a sovereign cure for any sufferer from lungs, not too far gone to be in danger of succumbing to the fatigue of such a journey as was contemplated.

Most thoroughly was his prediction borne out, for each day of the new life gave me renewed strength and vigour. When I left the Cape, I was with difficulty able to walk a mile, and looked a miserable invalid, utterly unfitted for exertion of any kind. Within six months of that time, after a stay of little over four months in the climate of the Trans-

vaal, I was able to walk from sunrise to sunset, rifle on shoulder, under a blazing sun, without feeling unduly fatigued at the end of a long day's work, and often with no more strengthening food to work on than mealie-meal pap, or other vegetable diet.

Encouraged by Dr. Biccard's advice I lost no time in seeing A. and F., and settling with them the definite plans of our campaign, and making out lists of all such things as we either thought of for ourselves, or F., from his former experience, warned us we should require. We soon found, however, that we could procure everything we should want as well in Natal as at the Cape, so put off making any purchases until we arrived there. This arrangement gave us all the more time to gather information from many different sources which might be of use. By this means also we were saved from buying many articles which would have been utterly superfluous and useless, but which our imagination, or eager storekeepers, pointed out to us as absolute necessities for our comfort or health.

F. himself started off by the very next boat to Pieter Maritzburg in Natal, for it was from thence that we determined to make our start, to buy a waggon, oxen, horses, provisions, and saddles; and also to collect together a sufficient supply of boys as servants against our arrival, which was to be three weeks later. I may here say that every coloured man, irrespective of age, be he six or sixty, is called a boy throughout the colony. Luckily, both A. and myself had brought out almost everything

necessary in the way of arms, ammunition, and clothing. Of the latter we soon found the less taken the better ; so we had not much to trouble ourselves about, except rifles and ammunition for the big game, as we were only prepared for small. A. soon after started for Port Elizabeth, promising to rejoin me there on board the boat, which would take us both on to Durban.

As yet we had decided on no definite route, for the very unsettled state of the natives throughout the whole of South Africa left us in doubt as to which part would be free for us to hunt in, and travel through, by the time we reached there. But on whichever side we ultimately decided on making our hunting-ground, we could not be wrong in going to Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal, as there we should be able to obtain the latest and most trustworthy advice both as to the locality of the game and the movements of the Kaffirs. Not a day passed without rumours and scares of fresh tribes having broken out, post-carts being fired on, and cattle being lifted ; but all of them when investigated turned out to be either totally devoid of truth, or grossly exaggerated. The explanation of a scare, however, does not come till so long after the false report, that it still leaves an uneasy impression on people's minds that there is no knowing what the next mail may bring true tidings of.

I employed the time I had to wait at the Cape, before catching a steamer direct to Durban, in collecting information from the few men there who had any practical experience of big game hunting

and travelling in the interior. Nothing is more surprising than the difficulty in obtaining any reliable information. At Cape Town almost less is known generally about the interior country of South Africa than at home in England. Almost every man I asked for information or advice said the same thing. "I mean to go and do it all some day, but have never yet been able to make a start, so cannot assist you."

The Cape Town Museum is well worth a visit, and gives a very good idea of the plants, birds, and insects to be met with; and I there was taught the best methods of skinning, stuffing, and preserving either birds, beasts, or insects. The finest feature of the Museum is a large and fine collection of South African Lepidoptera and Coleoptera, which the energetic curator, Mr. Trimen, has himself entirely collected, and in which his chief interest seems to centre.

F. had promised to have everything ready for us, if possible, by the end of the month; and as every one agreed that we should have to be out of the shooting country by the beginning of September, and that it would take us a full two months to reach the nearest point, that we could hope for big game, in whatever direction we started, we were anxious to make a move as soon as possible.

The "Melrose" was leaving on the 23rd. I secured my passage in her, and telegraphed A. to meet me on board at Port Elizabeth. Her advertised time for sailing was one in the afternoon, but it was past eight at night before we were clear of the docks. The navigation inside the docks is managed by the harbour officials, and as the ships'

officers have the most decided objection to receive or obey orders from those they consider their inferiors, a great deal of unnecessary delay takes place through their not working together.

The boat was very over-crowded, and as there was not a sufficient number of stewards on board for even the ordinary number of passengers, the unavoidable discomforts of a small steamer in dirty weather were greatly increased by all the meals being half an hour behind their time ; and when at last served up, all the various dishes were cold and greasy. The "Melrose" had the reputation of being one of the best of all the coasting boats ; so the sufferings of those who have to travel in the other boats must be beyond description, for the sea is almost invariably rough during the whole passage of five or six or even eight days. We kept a uniform course of about four miles from the mainland during daylight, but at night steered further out to sea, in case of any sudden squalls. The land view is dismal and uninteresting in the extreme ; during the first two days' passage nothing but barren hill sides, with no sign of vegetation upon them. Along the coast several wrecked ships, not yet washed to pieces and broken up, stand out distinctly against the white sand, forsaken and disabled, and act as scarecrows to the captains of the boats, warning them not to run any risk of a similar fate by attempting to cut off corners or hug the shore too closely. We reached Algoa Bay, the nautical term for Port Elizabeth, at midnight, and A., who had been waiting for hours in the cold and wet, came on board, but had to sleep on the

transom, as all the berths were occupied. The rest of the journey to Natal is rather more interesting, as the hill sides occasionally show a few patches of green grass and wooded knolls; now and then, too, we could pick out a puff of smoke from a native krall or from burning grass, which instantly had every glass on board directed to it, and caused various suggestions that it might be the troops fighting with the Kaffirs, although there could not possibly have been any of our soldiers within several hundred miles.

At East London we stopped just long enough to drop our mails and several intending volunteers.

One young man we landed with many tin boxes, sword-cases, &c., containing his outfit for a yeomanry regiment at home, which he intended to wear against the Kaffirs. From his conversation at the dinner-table he evidently expected to be given a very high command the moment he put in an appearance. Three others had been passengers on board the "Walmer Castle." They had come out to try their hands at business; but, excited by the stories circulating in Cape Town of fabulous sums being divided as the result of cattle and horse lifting from the Kaffirs, and believing in the charms of a rough life, had spent their capital, and were now come up to join the volunteers and have a look at the Kaffir before settling down into any steady work. Better for them that they had remained quietly at home even, for in one of the first papers I saw at Maritzburg not a month afterwards, were the names of two of the three among the killed.

Until we reached East London the boat had been surrounded by thousands of sea-birds of every size and description, from the albatross to Mother Carey's chickens; but from some unaccountable cause they all deserted us there, and we never saw a feather between that place and Durban.

East London has the proud distinction of having the very worst bar, or sand-bank, crossing the entrance to the harbour, of any port in South Africa. Often ships have to stay several days outside before they can unload their cargoes, as the sea is too rough for the lighters to attempt crossing the bar, and frequently mail boats are obliged to go past altogether, and carry on with them passengers and mails intended for the port.

On Sunday afternoon we had a stiffish gale of wind, which made the captain keep out some distance to sea, and so delay us; while we were obliged to remain below in misery and wet, as the waves constantly swept the decks, and made them unsafe.

But luckily the sea went down by Monday morning, when we dropped anchor about eight o'clock outside the bar of Durban harbour; for, like all the rest of the harbours, Durban also has its bar, but for which it would be one of the finest harbours in the world, as, once inside, the largest ship afloat can lie there in perfect safety. At present no ship which draws more than twelve feet of water can ever get in at all, and those drawing under that only at high water. A tug came off from the shore for passengers and baggage, landing us at the Point,

without the usual dripping which passengers suffer crossing through the surf on the bar.

At the Point we left our fire-arms and ammunition in charge of the Customs, and then placed ourselves and our luggage in a very broken-down and de-lapidated train, which took us up to the town of Durban, situated some two miles further up the harbour.

The train took the remarkably slow time of half-an-hour for the two miles, but the carriages would probably have fallen to pieces if they had attempted a higher rate of speed.

CHAPTER IV.

Durban Railway—Kaffir Carriers—Fever—Conveyances to Maritzburg—Royal Hotel Waiters—Kaffirs—Curfew Bell—Sunday Dinner.

AT Durban station a crowd of Kaffirs were in waiting to carry up the luggage to the various hotels. A. and myself picked out a dozen of them; and as we had been told to keep a sharp look-out to prevent anything being stolen, we had rather an anxious time before we saw all our goods deposited safely at our hotel. The boys would lag behind, pretending they wanted to rest, and we were not yet sufficiently at home with them to know how to keep them in order.

We had been very strongly advised to make as short a stay in Durban as we possibly could, for it is a notoriously unhealthy place, probably arising from the combined causes of poisoned water and unwholesome sanitary arrangements in regard to the drainage. While we were there every third person was or had been ill with a sort of low fever peculiar to Durban, and less frequently Pieter Maritzburg. The patient breaks out all over with red blotches and suffers severely from depression and weakness; as a rule it only lasts ten days or a fortnight, but occasionally takes a more serious form, and in some cases has a fatal termination. Quinine is the most important remedy; and so much had been prescribed

and consumed, that not a grain was to be procured at any price whatever, as the little the chemists had left in stock they kept to use in their prescriptions from regular customers.

The good people of Durban have lately been much exercised in mind, and roused to more energetic measures to prevent a recurrence of the epidemic, by the information from high scientific authorities that this particular form of fever, sometimes called Dingle fever, is almost a sure forerunner of Yellow Jack, and that it was common in Jamaica and other places before that dreaded complaint first appeared there.

But it is not such an easy matter as one would expect to transport oneself and baggage from Durban to Pieter Maritzburg, although they are spoken of in conjunction as the Port and City of Natal. There are two conveyances running daily up and down the road—an omnibus and the post-cart. On making inquiry at the booking-offices, we found that both were full for the next week to come, and even then we were informed that we could not take our heavy luggage with us. This being the case, we endeavoured to hire a conveyance of our own, which would take both us and our baggage. For some time we were unsuccessful in coming to terms, but at last arranged with the proprietor of the Royal Hotel, where we were staying, for him to provide us a trap and four horses, to do the journey of fifty-six miles in two days; but so as to get as much as possible out of us, he declared his inability to get the horses together till the following Tuesday. With a promise to this effect we had to content

ourselves ; and as we had to obtain magistrates' permits for guns, and then clear them from the Custom-house, we could not have been ready much before, although very anxious to leave Durban and exchange the stifling heat and dust-filled atmosphere both day and night, for the cool evenings and refreshing breezes we were prepared to find in Pieter Maritzburg.

The Royal Hotel did not hold out any inducements in the way of comfort for us to remain longer than necessary. Like most colonial hotels, it consists of a two-storied stone building containing some eight or ten rooms, and adjoining this, behind is an heterogeneous mass of outbuildings, which are used for the greater part of the bed-rooms, kitchen, offices, bath-room, and stables. The whole hotel is overrun with the most enormous cockroaches, some a couple of inches long ; and our voracious landlord, without a smile on his countenance, assured me that he had seen a couple of them catch, kill, and devour, a half-grown chicken. But as he afterwards also informed us that these same cockroaches were the chief ingredient in Worcester sauce, I will not vouch for the accuracy of either statement. The cooking is also greatly below the mark, and the wines are of the same quality generally met with throughout Africa—very expensive, and not worth drinking unless iced.

I was rather struck by the ornamentation of the dinner-table. Three pots of wretched artificial flowers were stuck in the centre, though the windows were half choked up with most lovely creepers, and flowering shrubs were growing in profusion all round

the house. But the artificial ones save the trouble of refilling, and saving of trouble is the great object of a man's life in Natal.

The indoor waiters in the hotel are all St. Helena boys, and are preferable in more senses than one to the Kaffirs, who do all the outdoor and stable work ; but in up-country inns, where the St. Helena boys cannot yet be procured, people have to put up with the inconvenience of Kaffirs.

At Durban I saw the first Kaffirs who impressed me really favourably, and I never saw finer specimens of the race anywhere than are to be seen there. They are mostly refugee Zulus, who have kept to themselves, and not intermarried and become demoralized. It is there an exception to see one under six feet, and they are nearly all well-knit, finely built fellows. Both men and women are obliged by law, all through the colonies, to clothe themselves decently when they come within the precincts of a town.

The women merely wind a length of brownish calico over their shoulders, and let it hang down to their knees, leaving most symmetrical calves and ankles exposed to view. The men adorn themselves with every possible variety of left-off European costume ; but old military tunics and jackets are the most fashionable and popular, and an old porter's jacket or guard's coat is almost equally admired. Tweed shooting-coats, frock-coats, moleskins, sacks, sheets, and blankets, all come in for a share of patronage.

Both men and women wear bangles on both ankles and arms, made of twisted brass wire, and

tight-fitting circlets of the same make between the calf and the knee. They also wear bracelets and necklaces of various sizes, and coloured beads worked in many combinations and quaint designs. Every man and boy has enormous holes through the lobes of his ears, and their ear-rings would astonish an English lady. Some keep their snuff-boxes there, and others their pipes; but the dandies have large pieces of carved wood or horn, and a sheet of coloured paper in a long roll is very fashionable at times.

At seven o'clock at night the "curfew" bell tolls. After that every Kaffir found in the town, or away from his location, is put in "trunk," as the goal is denominated throughout South Africa. No Kaffirs are allowed to sleep in town unless under the roof and care of a white. To facilitate this regulation pieces of ground are set apart outside the town, on which they may either build their own kralls, or occupy a sort of barrack provided for them. These bits of land, devoted to their use, are termed the Kaffir Locations, and are to be seen on the outskirts of all colonial townships of any size.

Durban is well off for churches, but the Wesleyans have the best of them all, and the service in their church is admirably conducted. On Sunday, throughout all South Africa, there is no late dinner, in clubs, hotels, or private houses, and a very heavy hot luncheon at three o'clock takes its place. In such a warm climate the effects of a hearty meal in the middle of the day cause the greater part of the population to pass the remainder of the afternoon and evening in slumber.

CHAPTER V.

Clearing Fire-arms—The Point—Gun-room—A Gun lost—Gun-running—Hot Nights—Drive to Pinetown—Bargain for a Conveyance—Mrs. Murray's Hotel—An early Start—Railway to Maritzburg—Camperdown—Pieter Maritzburg.

ON Monday morning we proceeded to obtain possession of our fire-arms and ammunition from the Customs authorities, but it was a work of more labour and trouble and vexatious delay than we had deemed possible. On landing, all fire-arms are seized and carried off to the gun-room belonging to the Government officials, and the owners are informed that they must obtain a permit from the resident magistrates before they can regain possession of them. At the magistrate's office there was such a crowd of our fellow-passengers all waiting to receive their permits, that a couple of hours were wasted before we could obtain ours duly made out and signed, for our various fowling-pieces, rifles, and revolvers. The only formality to be gone through before obtaining these permits is to sign a declaration that the weapons are for personal defence or sport, and not for trading purposes. Having at last secured these necessary documents, for which only a trifling charge is made, we proceeded to the Point by the 'bus which regularly plies between it and the town. When we presented ourselves at the gun-

room we were told that the guns must be treated as general merchandise, and cleared by proper duplicate forms and papers, which of course we had to employ a regular landing agent to effect for us. We were now delayed another two hours, although our very obliging and courteous agent, Mr. James, did his best to get the papers all filled out as quickly as possible. At last we again repaired to the gun-room with the orders for the deliverance and stamping of the guns with the Government numbers and letters. But now a worse difficulty arose, for one of the rifles was missing. The Customs officers declared that it had never been sent ashore, while I was equally positive that it had; but to make sure, I took a boat out to the "Melrose," where the case was marked as having been duly landed on to the quay. As the officials had lost it, I felt inclined to let them have the trouble of finding it; but Mr. James assured me that if I did not find it myself in all probability I had seen the last of it. As there was no other course open I set to work, going through warehouse after warehouse until, to my joy, I at length found it amongst a lot of general luggage which had been passed as free from duty. But it was now too late to get them stamped; so after a whole day wasted we had to return to the town no nearer the possession of our guns than in the morning. Next day I was down betimes at the office, and after spending two or three hours waiting, at last saw all the guns stamped with the customs numbers and letters, and paid the exorbitant duty of 1% a barrel on them, besides a percentage on their

market value. All expenses connected with them taken into account, each barrel cost not far off 30s., which is a most oppressive duty; and worst of all, does not in the least degree effect the object it was constituted for, viz. to prevent the natives and ill-affected people obtaining possession of warlike weapons. For those who trade in gun-running now have their boxes of rifles sent to Delagoa Bay, and from there can pass as many as they can dispose of into the very heart of Zululand, or into the northern interior, at a trifling charge in comparison, of 5s. a gun.

All the passenger traffic between the Point and the town is carried on by means of 'busses, which run at frequent intervals to the far end of the town and through the suburbs and back again. The railway is only used for heavy luggage and merchandise, as the carriages are very uncomfortable, and the trains are very few and far between. But better things are promised, and new rolling-stock has already come out from England.

We had been promised a trap in the afternoon to take us up to Pinetown (twelve miles) where we proposed to sleep the night. The heat, dust, and oppressively hot night—made almost unbearable by every pestilent insect of earth and air—made us anything but amiably disposed towards our host when he informed us that owing to his driver being drunk we could not start till next day, for his horses were too valuable to be trusted to a stranger. Neither persuasion nor threats could induce him to let us make a start with another driver.

As we were quite aware that we were simply

being forced by a rapacious landlord against our wills to stop in an uncomfortable hotel, and pay excessive charges for everything we ate or drank, we determined to try and hire a trap elsewhere; but after visiting every stable in the town, we had to give it up as a bad business. However, our determination had the desired effect on our landlord; for seeing that we had made up our minds not to be detained any longer, and fearing to lose a remunerative job, he informed us on Wednesday morning that the trap should be ready for us by after tiffin.

When our trap—a light double dog-cart—at last came round, we found that we had not been deceived as to the merits of the team, for they were without doubt a first-rate lot. At the last moment a dispute arose as to who should pay the expenses of the road; for as we were paying a very high price, we naturally expected the proprietor to bear it. However, by sending a driver without a penny in his pocket, he obliged us to do so ourselves, and feed the man into the bargain; but as he was a first-rate whip and a civil fellow, we did not object to the latter.

The drive to Pinetown was thoroughly enjoyable. Full twelve miles distant, we performed the journey in just an hour and a half, including a stoppage to give the horses time to wash out their mouths and the half-caste who drove us an opportunity to drink a glass of Natal rum, which he took down without winking, although it was as fiery and strong as petroleum and cayenne pepper mixed together.

Up hill, down dale, and along the level, our driver kept his team up to a swinging gallop, and we had

to hold on fast to prevent being jolted off, for the road is very stony and full of deep ruts. Each separate piece of luggage was securely lashed on, so we were relieved of anxiety as to its safety, and only had to take care of ourselves.

We pulled up at Mrs. Murray's Pinetown Hotel, just in time to get a comfortable bathe before evening tea, as, in the country, dinner is always in the middle of the day. We did ample justice to the new-laid eggs, splendid ham, and fresh bread and butter, with which we were provided.

As Pinetown is 1300 feet above Durban, the change in the atmosphere is very great, and we soon found it was too chilly for the verandah; so after finishing our cigars and drinking a delicious concoction of soda water, sugar, and fresh limes, which our hostess presented to us, we remembered an early start had to be made, and turned into the most inviting-looking beds we had anywhere come across. We were up betimes in the morning; but Mrs. Murray, always anxious for the comforts of her visitors, had some coffee and eggs all ready for us at 5.30, and by 6 we were well on our road to the Half-way House, so as to get one stage over before the heat of the sun made travelling almost overpowering to both travellers and horses. At nine o'clock we arrived at the Half-way House, kept by Mrs. Welch, who speedily had an excellent breakfast ready for us, and our morning drive had prepared us to thoroughly appreciate it.

A railway is in course of construction between Durban and Maritzburg, the proposed line of which

runs along the coach road the greater part of the way, with a very occasional tunnel here and there, where the inclination defied any attempts at zigzag cutting. Kaffir labour is almost exclusively employed in its construction, under white supervision. The Kaffirs are divided into gangs of from twelve to twenty, each division under a white overseer. Every gang then has a piece of the line allotted to it for its share, and on their allotted portion the boys build a krall, where they live until the work is finished. Thus the whole length of line is being worked upon at the same time.

After a two-hours' rest we set off again for Camperdown, the last stage before Maritzburg. This part of the road is rather more interesting, as here and there long lines of jagged, wild ravines, and wooded kloofs, break the monotony of the hard dried-up plains. We passed a great many waggons laden with wool and hides on their way down to Durban, and the drivers were complaining bitterly of the want of grass and water on the road; their oxen bore witness to the truth of their complaints, for the poor beasts were nothing but skin and bones, and appeared to have hardly strength enough to drag themselves along the hard, hilly, dusty road, much less to draw a waggon with from 4000 to 6000 lbs weight on it.

The inn at Camperdown is as uncomfortable as it can well be; and although hungry, we could not manage to eat any of the broken meat and stale bread laid out for our luncheon upon a filthy table covered with a cloth which had done duty for

the last month. Dirty plates, greasy knives and forks made the meal additionally uninviting, so we contented ourselves with some biscuits and a bottle of luke-warm beer while the horses had a feed.

After a ten-miles' drive we at last came in sight of Pieter Maritzburg, the City of Natal. Although the town is nearly 3000 feet above the level of the sea, from the height of the hills with which it is surrounded it appears to lie very low. The little town is so well planted with trees, and has so many gardens both in it and around, that the view from the hill, driving down towards it, quite unprepares a stranger for the well-built continuous streets he may presently drive through, and makes the town look far smaller than it actually is.

We took up our quarters at the Royal Hotel, a fine stone building, with large lofty bedrooms, which would put those of most English hotels to shame. There was only time to get out of our dust-covered clothes before a capital *table-d'hôte* dinner was served up at 6.30.

We were rather surprised to hear nothing either of or from F. at our hotel, but put off making inquiries in the town till the morning, and strolled about outside with our cigars, enjoying the cool evening and watching the fireflies glancing through the air, filled with the noisy chirrupings of crickets in the trees and croakings of innumerable frogs in all the sloots running along each side of the streets. The cool air was such a delightful change from the sultry atmosphere of Durban, that we were reluctant to go indoors until late at night.

CHAPTER VI.

Preparation for a Start—Permits for Guns—Obtaining Ammunition
—List of Stores—Beads—Iced Drinks—Market Prices—
Fish—Kaffir Superstition—Our Boys.

NEXT morning F., who had heard of our arrival, was waiting for us when we came down to breakfast. Rather to our disappointment his preparations for us were not quite finished, as he had been obliged to journey some distance to buy a waggon and oxen suitable for our wants. However, the waggon was in the waggon-maker's yard, having the finishing touches put to it; and the oxen, fourteen in number, of the Zulu breed, were under the charge of a neighbouring petty chief, Moheesa, who had also agreed to send three or more boys to accompany us. F. had also procured for us a couple of good serviceable horses with saddles and bridles; one of them was well known as an excellent shooting-horse, and the other had a turn of speed to recommend him. Our stores were all ordered and only waiting for the waggon to be ready to hold them, so as we were promised it early on Saturday we hoped to make a start on Monday morning. The only business left for us to transact ourselves was to procure the necessary permits from the resident magistrate for carrying our guns, and for enabling us to buy powder and caps from the Ordnance department.

Great precautions are taken to prevent either fire-arms or powder falling into the hands of the Kaffirs or Boers. No man may either buy or sell a gun without obtaining permission, and also registering the transfer at the magistrate's office. No powder is allowed to be sold by private individuals, and it is a very tiresome task to obtain any from the Ordnance department, who have the sale of it.

At the magistrate's office we had first to register the Customs-house numbers of all the guns we purposed carrying, and obtained a separate permit for each; but the powder was a much longer business. We first had to fill up forms, signed in duplicate, to the effect that the 200 lbs. of powder we required was for the sole use and defence of our party, and not for any purpose of trading with natives within the boundaries of the colonies. Next we had to sign a bond, in conjunction with a householder, in 100*l.* apiece, that we would hold to our declarations, and also that we would "behave orderly and cause our servants to do likewise when outside the borders of the colony."

Armed with these documents, we proceeded to the Comptroller of arms, whose consent it was necessary to obtain before applying to the magistrate for the requisite order upon the superintendent of ammunition.

The Comptroller made no difficulties when we explained our purpose, and with his permission we returned to the magistrate's office, and without having to pay any costs, rather to our surprise, obtained the warrant for the superintendent of ammunition. This function rests in an ironmonger, to whom

we paid the money for the powder and caps, receiving another order for their delivery, upon the care-taker of the magazine. The magazine is situated a couple of miles from the town, and necessitated our hiring a carriage to drive out and bring it back in. We took three sorts of powder : sharps at 1s. 7*d.* per lb. for the natives we had with us to use in their muzzle-loaders ; No. 6, 4*s.* 3*d.*, rifle grain, for our own large-bore rifles ; and No. 4, 4*s.*, for our fowling-pieces.

Cartridge-cases, wads, and shot, we required no permission to buy from a gun-smith in the town, 2 cwt. of lead, at twopence a lb. ; 2 bags of loupers. as the Dutch call the A.A. shot ; 3 bags of No. 5, 2 of No. 6, 1 of No. 8, and 1 of dust shot, with a large assortment of wads and empty cartridge-cases ; 3000 falling block (Westley-Richard) cartridges for the carbines, 1000 for the long-range rising-block rifle, and some hundreds of ball cartridges for each of the large-bore rifles, and 1000 loaded with various kinds of shot for the fowling-pieces, completed our magazine.

We took a large amount of lead, for although there was small chance of our using even a tithe of it, yet we could take no more convenient article of trade, as the cost of carriage more than quadruples its value up country. Our other stores consisted of,—

2 cwt. coffee.	4 doz. jams.
1 box tea.	2 cwt. salt.
25 lbs. raisins and plums.	3 doz. preserved lobster.
1 doz. each brandy and gin.	1 cwt. rice.
3 doz. pickles.	1 cwt. candles.

30 lbs. sweets.	10 lbs. chocolate.
3 cwt. sugar.	6 tins Australian meat.
200 Adelaide flour.	3 doz. preserved salmon.
1 cwt. rusks.	1 cwt. potatoes.
3 galls. rum for boys.	2 gross matches.
8 doz. milk.	2 large hams.
4 doz. soups, vinegar, pepper, mustard, Worcester sauce, and spice.	

Medicines.

1 oz. quinine.	2 large bots. chlorodyne.
3 boxes Cockle's pills.	1 box rhubarb pills.
4 oz. chloroform.	1 lb. Epsom salts.
1 bottle castor oil.	arnica.
Lint, wool, zinc ointment, diachylum plaister, court plaister, surgical needles, lancet and scissors, bottle of sweet oil.	

Miscellaneous.

Arsenical soap, alum, knives and scissors, a nine-gallon case of paraffin oil, and a paraffin cooking-stove for use in wet weather, but which we never used during the whole journey. Japanned iron plates, pint cups of the same material, spoons, forks, knives, pepper, salt and mustard tins, a dozen skinning knives, saws, axes, spades, lanterns, a large collection of carpenter's tools, and supplies of rims, rim py and forslat.

The large amounts of coffee and salt we were advised to take was a matter of wonder to me, until it was explained that any money was almost valueless in parts of the country we might probably visit. It was necessary to always have at hand some article which would form a medium of exchange for

eggs, milk, corn, or any commodity we might fall short of. For the same purpose we took with us, 3 doz. coloured blankets, 3 doz. pairs of sheets, 6 pieces of Pun-Jum linen, 60 Kaffir picks, a large roll of thick brass wire to make bangles of, a dozen sheets with enormous pictures of lions and elephants in the middle of them, and 35 lbs. of beads of various colours. Beads, however, are perhaps the most risky article of trade, as, like more civilized nations, the Kaffirs have most fastidious and variable tastes in the matter of finery. One year, for instance, a handful of large blue beads will purchase a tusk of ivory from a member of one tribe, and in another tribe ten times the quantity will not be taken for a bucket of mealies; but as likely as not the trader who trusts to this and takes up a large quantity to the first tribe another year, will find that a very small dark red or any other kind is all the rage, and that his blues are not as valuable, after having travelled a thousand miles, as in the town he started from.

Powder, lead, and caps, are the only commodities which are certain to be eagerly run after, and which occasionally will command almost fabulous prices. Even within the civilized parts of the Transvaal I have seen a pound of powder, costing at Maritzburg only 1s. 7d. sold for 2l. Of course the sale was illegal, and the seller ran the risk of being informed against by the buyer, who would share in the very heavy fine which would certainly be inflicted.

The sweets were specially intended for the Boers, who are great sweet-tooths, and a handful of lolly-pops will often prove efficacious in obtaining a supply of

milk, eggs, or butter, when money would have been useless.

At Maritzburg we procured two Westley-Richard falling-block carbines, sighted up to 800 yards, which were very light, handy, and altogether effective weapons for use on horseback.

We took the opportunity of being near the volunteer rifle-ranges, and also a gun-smith, to try the sighting of all our guns, as well as give them a thorough overhauling. We followed the advice of several old hunters, and took out the steel sights, putting ivory ones in their places, as the sun glares less on the ivory than the steel. If the sight could only be kept a dull black, it would be preferable to the white; but I was never able to prevent the black rubbing off after a time; and then, if there was any sun, it was impossible to take a true aim. I could not obtain a piece of ebony, or should have experimented with it; but I fancy after a time the continual rubbing would put a polish on that even, and so render it as glittering in the sun as steel.

The heat was very great in Maritzburg during the daytime, and as there was no ice in the town, everything was tepid. Two enterprising establishments widely advertised iced drinks; and so drew many thirsty people eager to cool their parched throats, but only to utterly disappoint them; for the boasted iced-drinks of these veracious establishments were no cooler than those to be had elsewhere; and the angry expostulations of the deceived ones were met by the assurance that the last piece of ice had just melted, but if they would come in again it would be

all right. We made several unsuccessful attempts, so gave it up as a bad job ; and I am inclined to think the ice only existed on the advertisement sheets.

Eggs, milk, and fish are almost as conspicuous as the ice by their absence in any form from a bill of fare. Eggs were being sold in the market at 3s. 6d. to 4s. a dozen, and preserved milk was the only shape in which that article was procurable. In the winter months an occasional supply of fish arrives from Durban, and finds a very good market even at the high price cost of carriage drives it up to. Very few of the river fish of South Africa are fit to eat, and none of them are worth the trouble of picking out the bones. The only way we ever found of eating them with any comfort or safety was to bake them with vinegar, which made the bones brittle and not liable to choke one with every mouthful. We never ate fish when any other food was procurable. Very few Kaffirs in their native state will touch fish, as they are tabooed to them by the witch-doctors ; but their superstition on such points cannot have a very strong hold on them, and they do not eat them, more because, in their ignorance, they are afraid of being poisoned. After our boys had once by accident tasted the remains of a tin of potted salmon, they were always particularly eager to be given a taste of "feesh" whenever we were indulging in any of our tinned supplies, or even of the fish we caught and cooked ourselves.

Now that our stores were all collected, our battery of guns and supplies of ammunition complete, and

oxen only waiting for the waggon to be finished, all that remained for us to do was to collect our retinue of boys. We had determined to take from Pieter Maritzburg only such boys as were necessary for the care of the waggon, horses, oxen, and the cooking department, and to pick up the boys for hunting purposes in the country we ultimately decided on trekking to. All Saturday was devoted to this purpose. After inspecting very many who did not suit us, or who were unwilling to go on a long journey with a more or less indefinite termination, we selected an American negro called Joseph Francis as our cook and general man of all work, at 50s. a month; William, a strong, tall half-caste from the old colony, as driver, at 50s. a month; another half-caste at 20s. as forelouter or leader of the oxen; and Jantze, sent by Moheesa, and who was strongly recommended to us, to look after the horses and make himself generally useful, at 2*l.* a month. We gave up the entire management of the boys and waggon to F., as our inexperience would have led us into endless blunders, sometimes not easily rectified.

CHAPTER VII.

Howick—A second Waggon—Castle Hotel—Waterfalls—Troubles with the Boys—And the Waggon—Repacking—Sunday Picnics—Our Start—Our first Outspan—No Game—Mooi River.

THE waggon-maker was not up to his time with the waggon ; and as all our preparations were finished, and we could do no good staying in Pieter Maritzburg, where the heat, which had increased daily, made residence unpleasant, A. and myself determined on riding out to Howick, a small village fourteen miles from the town, on the main road to Pretoria, and at an elevation of a thousand feet higher, where we were assured we should be able to spend a few days enjoyably with the benefit of a cooler atmosphere ; and there we intended staying until F. should bring the waggon out, and let us commence our journey.

Before leaving Maritzburg we were introduced to a traveller with waggon and oxen, etc., all ready for the road, who wished to join our party, at all events as far as Pretoria ; and as his object, like our own, was to go in for any sport possible to procure on the way, and not be too hurried, we agreed to travel together till anything turned up to part us ; as it is always an important advantage to have at one's call a second span of bullocks and extra heads and

hands to fall back upon in any emergency, such as an unusually stiff bit of country, a stick in a mud-hole, a breakdown, or any other of the many obstacles we had to encounter and overcome before we could reach our destination. P.'s waggon was already on the top of the town-hill, as the ascent of a very formidable mountain just out of Maritzburg is called, and which in bad weather has often delayed a heavily laden waggon for a fortnight before it has reached the summit. As ours would be able to join him in three days' time he determined to stay where he was, and come on with F. to pick us up at Howick. A. and myself started off at three o'clock, with the few articles we required for two or three days' stay in our saddle-bags. From the side of the hill we had a very fine view of the town and low-lying country for many miles round ; but when fairly on the top, ups and downs of sparsely covered sand gave us an uninteresting ride for a couple of hours before we came in sight of the lights of the village, for the sun had gone down and darkness was upon us before we arrived at the Castle Hotel, kept by Mr. Pruffer and his wife. Pruffer himself is a German, and has had a most adventurous life. He was in the first rush at Ballarat, and passed many years wandering about Australia before trying his luck at the diamond fields of South Africa : from there he migrated to Maritzburg, where he built, and for some time kept the Royal Hotel. Things not going well, he took the Castle, at Howick, which he and Mrs. Pruffer now do their best, to make like a real

home to all their visitors. It is worth a long journey to sit on the balcony of the little house after an excellent dinner and listen to Pruffer's yarns and very quaint and shrewd remarks on the men and manners he has come across in his travels, from a blue-eyed, broken-nosed Hottentot to Prince Bismarck.

At Howick the great objects of interest are two waterfalls, the first where the river falls, when full, a clear 360 feet into a broad gorge, down which it takes its course till it forms part of the Umgeni river. About two miles above this fall is a place to me connected with a very pleasant party, where the river broadens out and forms a beautiful series of small waterfalls across the whole breadth of the channel of the stream ; and on every dry ridge, and from every deep crevice of the rocks in the centre of the water, grow brilliant flowers and tall grasses, making a lovely contrast in colour with the mosses and water-weeds on the spray-splashed rocks.

F. did not get away with the waggon till Wednesday evening, but managed to reach the summit of the town hill before he outspanned for the night. While there the forelouper proved obstreperous, so F. dismissed him on the spot, and sent him at once right away from the waggon. Next day, after they had inspanned and were on the road, a sheriff's officer appeared, who insisted on taking Francis the black cook away with him, as the stupid fellow had got into a mess with some fascinating creature of the same colour, who on his departure had sued him for breach of promise, and

obtained a verdict with damages at 15*l.*, which with costs amounted to 20*l.*

F. came on without him, and picking up P. on the road, the two waggons arrived in the evening just after dark, and outspanned on the top of Howick Hill, at the back of the hotel.

As a boy like Francis was almost a necessity to us at our first start off, F. next day rode into Pieter Maritzburg, to see what he could do towards releasing him from "trunk;" and as on inquiring he heard that the boy was well worth his hire, he determined to pay the fine for him, and let him work it off in the wages we had agreed to. As the authorities made no difficulties, F. paid the fine at once, and started Francis off in the post-cart to join the waggons.

The rough road from Maritzburg was of service in showing up any weak point there might still be about the waggon, while at a convenient place to have it put to rights. We discovered that one of the tires needed tightening, which delayed us another two days, as the Howick blacksmith had such a press of business on that he could not give us his time at once; and it would not have been of any avail to hurry him, or we should have been told to take our waggon elsewhere. The delay also allowed us to make good such things as we had either overlooked or forgotten in town, and also to turn out all the stores and blankets, etc., and pack them in again, so as to give us a little more breathing and moving room. Our waggon was eighteen feet from end to end, and four feet six inches broad, fitted

fore and aft with a large box running across the entire breadth. The front box formed the fore seat, with a foot-board in front. From the end of the front box to the end of the waggon ran a treble canvas tent supported with strong circular ribs, and this was our only home and shelter for many months. In the front box we kept the smaller cooking apparatus (which was in constant use), our knives, plates, spoons, salt, pepper and various condiments, and whatever meat, bread, etc., we might be eating at the time ; also our carpenter's tools, cleaning rods for the guns, cartridges, matches and tobacco ; in fact, it formed a receptacle for anything which had not a fixed place of its own. The back box we filled with small stores of candles, jams, pickles, coffee, sugar, and rusks, so as not to be obliged to apply oftener than necessary to the large packages in the interior, which necessitated a partial unpacking of the whole waggon. Along the outsides we hung on hooks, or fastened, the spades, saws, and pick-axe, the poles of our tent, and a table—or rather the board which, supported by two brackets, formed a table—our frying-pan and gridiron, and the triangle sticks to hang the kettle from. Underneath the waggon, hung our kettle, cooking-pots and lantern, tins of anti-friction grease for the axles, and anything which either from its dirty nature or size, was unfit for the inside.

A waggon before it is properly packed is "chaos" in perfection, and takes a very long time to put ship-shape. At first it looked as if there would be no possibility of packing our various goods in it, so that there might be left sufficient space between

the top of the tent and the cartel upon which A. and myself were to sleep, to admit of our crawling in.

Transport riders, as the owners of the waggons which do all the traffic of the county are called, as a rule sleep underneath their waggons, either on the bare ground or in a hammock slung between the wheels; but as the nights were bitterly cold on the high lands, A. and myself were not inclined to undergo this additional hardship when there was no necessity to. At length we fitted in the last package satisfactorily, but not without serious doubts on my mind as to whether we should ever be able to find anything we might want without going through the whole process of loading and reloading over again.

As it was now Friday, and we had resolved not to trek on Sundays, except in cases of necessity, we thought it better to put off our departure till Monday in order to have a clear week before us. In the evening at dinner we were treated to the visit of a rising professional man from Durban, in a complete state of intoxication; but as Pruffer rose equal to the occasion, and kept his eccentricities within bounds, it was a source of more amusement than annoyance.

There is no regular service in the church at Howick; but, occasionally, a clergyman comes over and preaches, or else the schoolmaster reads the prayers. Sunday is the great day for every one who has a trap or horse in Maritzburg to have an outing; and quiet Howick was filled with finely, if not tastefully, dressed ladies and their attendant cavaliers, some of whom dropped in at the Castle;

but the greater part went to Ford's Hotel, a larger and, for a casual visitor, more convenient establishment, which in one building performs the office of hotel, store, post-office, and stage agency.

We had intended to make an early start on the Monday morning, but a heavy fall of rain delayed us till one o'clock; then at length the long whips cracked, and with many a fiendish yell from the drivers to their oxen, we treked off on our journey. Rain is always an obstacle to trekking, for besides making the trek slippery, and therefore dangerous and difficult, it wets the oxen's necks, and the yoke chafing against them is very liable to cause sores which will disable them for days, as when once formed they are difficult to cure. We made a six-mile trek, nearly all up-hill, which took us till one o'clock, when we lighted up a fire and prepared our first repast—beefsteaks fried with onions, potatoes, and coffee—as good a dinner as if we had been in Maritzburg. The keen air and the novelty of the proceeding had so sharpened our appetites, that we made very short work of a large pan-full of hissing meat. In three hours, when the oxen had filled themselves, we again inspanned and treked on to above Curry's Hotel. As it then began to rain and was quite dark, I thought I would put off for a night sleeping in the waggon, as we could not see to make things comfortable, and went down to Curry's, where after a capital tea of hashed mutton I was not sorry to turn in between the last pair of sheets I used for many months.

Next morning A., who had slept in the waggon,

called me at six ; and immediately after the waggons passed by, so we jumped upon the fore-seat, and rode there till we outspanned at nine o'clock beside a clear but shallow stream, in which we had a wash before breakfast.

After breakfast we took our guns and made an unsuccessful attempt to find birds or game of any description on either side of the stream, and through some rocky ground, but never saw fur or feather. In our afternoon trek we reached the top of Kar Kloof, where we were able to procure some fresh eggs, milk, and bread, and there we passed the night.

The country we treked through during the day was uninteresting in the extreme, and the same may be said of the whole country between Maritzburg and Pretoria, with very few exceptions. The veldt stretches away as far as the eye can reach in long undulating monotonous ridges, or else the road lies between hills devoid of vegetation, and not broken or rugged enough to be picturesque.

The only trees along the whole route are the blue gums and willows planted round their homes by the few farmers who live near the road ; or in the distance an occasional wooded kloof in the side of a range of hills.

Thursday, 11th.—By an early trek we arrived at Weston on the Mooi river, and there crossed one of the best bridges in the colony, and which makes the river passable at all times. We outspanned the far side, following the invariable rule of the Boers, who always cross a stream when they get the chance, as

a sudden flood may at any moment come down, caused by a thunder-storm, and the river become unfordable for weeks before the oxen can be in-spanned.

We stayed the day at Weston, and there P. procured a pointer, which subsequently proved utterly useless, as it had never been broken in ; but as it was a gift he could not complain. We had tried everywhere, both in Maritzburg and along the road, to obtain either pointers or setters, but in vain, for they are so rare and valuable that no man who has one will part with it, and I was never able to get one worth its keep the whole time I was in South Africa.

The sun was too hot now in the middle of the day to attempt treking, so we had only the early morning and cool of the evening left us. A transport rider trusts to do the greater part of his journey by night, and when he has a moon will trek almost continuously from sun-set to sun-rise, and then allow his oxen to feed all through the severe heat of the mid-day hours, but this entails a great deal of discomfort, which we, who were travelling for pleasure rather than profit, did not feel inclined to undergo.

CHAPTER VIII.

Estcourt—Drivers and Foreloupers—Kaffir Taxes—A Heavy Storm—Caterpillars—Plover—Crossing the Tugela by moonlight—Colenso—Chickens—Trap-door Spider—Ostrich Plains—Sand River—Washing-day.

THE next day Estcourt was reached. We were just getting tired of a long uninteresting up-hill trek, when suddenly turning the point of a hill we came upon, to my mind, the prettiest view in all Natal. The township lay at our feet far below us, in a plain dotted over with mimosa bushes, the river turning and twisting through it, along the banks of which were dotted several farmhouses surrounded by trees and fields of green corn.

While at Estcourt we had to get rid of our driver William for gross insolence and disobedience to F., whom he refused to consider his master, in spite of all we could do to make him. He was a very sulky, lazy boy, which made us not so unwilling to part with him as we otherwise should have been, for there was no denying his capabilities as an excellent driver, and it was quite a pleasure to watch the oxen, all pulling together and each one drawing to a pound his proper weight, when William was sitting on the box. Drivers, as a rule, strongly object to doing work they consider outside their peculiar duties, under which is included all personal attend-

ance on their master, and his cooking. The driver, too, enjoys certain privileges apart from the many other boys who may be with a waggon. The ordinary boys are content with mealie meal and salt, with which they make "pap" or porridge, and an occasional treat of meat when passing through a town, and of course when in a game country they may have as much of the flesh of the animals killed as they choose. The drivers, instead of mealie meal, are given Boer meal, as a very coarse wheaten flour is called, with which they make damper, or if they can get grease, cook cakes made with it in the frying-pan. They also bargain to be provided with coffee and sugar.

On a shooting expedition, however, the boys always expect to have better pay and rations than on ordinary transport riding; and if there are Englishmen who are new to the work, the boys are sure to be spoiled by too much indulgence. Our boys all had coffee and sugar, and we also, as an additional treat, gave them an occasional tot of rum and water. The cook and driver had the remains of our meals, so were just as well off as we were ourselves. But the results of our over-indulging them was rather ludicrously shown later on. We had been eating bôk every meal, and the boys had been literally gorging themselves for days past. As we were passing a Dutchman's farm, we bought from him a quarter of a sheep for our own use, as a change from the bôk; but Jantze, our driver, presuming on our rather weak indulgence, had the effrontery to come up and ask, with rather an injured air, for mutton too, as he was

tired of the dry bôk. Needless to say, Jantze rejoined the other boys, who had been anxiously awaiting the result of his mission, in a very crestfallen condition.

At Estcourt there is a barrack capable of holding forty men and horses of the mounted police force; but a few days before we arrived they had started off on an expedition, to reconnoitre the Zulu borders, and intimidate, by a show of force, some of the outside natives who had been troublesome and turbulent for some months past, and had at last made armed interference necessary, by utterly refusing to pay their taxes. Roughly speaking, the taxes on the natives amount to about a pound a year for each hut in a krall, which in Natal is about equal, according to the season, to a meud and a half of mealies, or in other words, three hundred pounds' weight of Indian corn.

Mealies have to be the standard of value between Kaffirs and whites, as being the staple article of food; their real value varies but little from year to year, and besides it is the only article a Kaffir in Natal has to dispose of.

Soon after leaving Estcourt in the evening a very violent storm of thunder, lightning, and rain broke upon us; and although in an inconvenient situation for staying the night, we were forced to outspan. As the pouring rain put a fire out of the question, we had to content ourselves with some biscuits and butter for our supper, and were thankful we had eaten dinner before leaving.

We were a little anxious as to the rainproof qualities of the waggon; but our fears were satis-

factorily allayed, for not a single drop oozed through, although the rain continued all night without ceasing.

P. had an American waggon, which gave him far more room inside for sleeping accommodation, but was not nearly so heavily and strongly built as ours, which was Natal made. Old colonists shook their heads when they looked at it, and were very doubtful as to the wheels standing the rough work up country; but P. was confident that, although slighter, superior finish made up for our massiveness.

Saturday, 13th.—We were now in a very trying part of the country for our oxen, as the caterpillars, which in myriads devastate the land, had devoured every blade of grass for miles round, and the poor beasts had to go without their day's food. We made a very long trek, so as to get over the bare country as soon as possible, but were unable to find any good feed for the oxen. In the middle of the day we outspanned beside a stream, with some thorn bushes along the sides, and here we for the first time made an addition to the pot with our guns. While cooking our dinner, a large flock of plover wheeled round us and settled within easy shot. We made a rush for the guns, which were lying all ready upon the cartel, and as the birds rose a volley laid low half-a-dozen. They settled again some distance off, and we started in pursuit; but they were now cautious, and we could not manage to get within shot. However, on our way back we shot several large blue doves, which were better eating even than the plovers.

The moon was now full, so we did not inspan till the sun went down, as it gave the oxen a longer time to crop the few green patches along the banks, and nibble off the tender shoots of the mimosa. Just before midnight we came to Colenso, on the Tugela River, which further down forms the boundary between Natal and Zululand. The moon gave us such a brilliant light that we determined to ford the river at once, and outspan on the other side. The crossing was a very novel and exciting scene. The river was about eighty yards wide, and the water, although low in parts, came just over the bottom of the waggon. Our waggon leading, we went down the steep bank with a run and splash into the stream. Josiah, the other driver, came up to lend his voice and whip to Jantze, who himself, very excited, stood on the footboard yelling like a madman, and cracking his long whip over the backs of the oxen, looked like a black devil. We crossed over without any mishap, and without even wetting the inside of the waggon. Afterwards P.'s waggon followed with equal success; and drawing up both parallel, close to the bank of the river, we made our camp for the night. After giving out a tot of rum apiece to the boys, and indulging in the same ourselves, we were glad to turn in, very well satisfied with the success of our first week's trekking, although we had not gone as long a distance on our road as we at starting had hoped for.

Colenso is a very small village, and consists of two inns, a store, a blacksmith's shop, and three or four other small houses; but on our side of the

river there were no houses at all, and we did not think it worth while crossing over to the other. A bridge is in course of construction, which will be a great boon to travellers, who are now sometimes delayed for days, and even weeks, when the Tugela is flooded. For our Sunday dinner we had a capital stew of chicken, potatoes, and onions. We bought the chickens from some Kaffirs at our previous out-spanning ground, two for a shilling and a little salt. During the months of March, April, and May, it is particularly difficult to procure fowls, eggs, or milk along the road, as the drivers of the wool waggons who are coming down in numbers to the coast, buy up everything that can be eaten. Zulu Kaffirs never keep fowls, for some extraordinary reason of their own; and as most of the Kaffirs about the Tugela are refugees from Zululand, who still hold their own superstitions, chickens and eggs are quite a rare delicacy.

Close to our waggon we found the web, or rather nest, of a trap-door spider, which in its habits is one of the most curious insects of Africa. It first bores a well-shaped hole into the ground about a foot deep, and an inch and a half in diameter. The walls of this it covers with thick-spun web, and over the top builds a strong covering of earth and small stones, weaving them into a hard, solid mass; but in the very centre of this is a little circular trap-door, which opens and shuts on a hinge of spun web. It required some force to open the door, but when once opened, it worked up and down quite easily. We could not see the spider, so I suppose he was out hunting for

the game which he stores up in this novel kind of larder.

On Monday we started off again at sun-rise, and passing the road to Ladysmith on our right, kept on the trek to Harrismith, and outspanned in Ostrich Plains ; but for several years the bird which gave the plains their name has been an exile from them ; and if it ever again appears, these will probably have been raised by an incubator on an ostrich farm. Our fresh meat here ran out for the first time ; but we opened some Australian beef, which, with onions and pepper, made a most excellent stew.

Next day we treked on to Sand River, where we had a bathe, and also set the boys at work to wash our clothes. Our dress now consisted of broad-brimmed soft slouch hats ; flannel shirts, with a pocket in them ; greenish yellow moleskin breeches, and butcher boots. Moleskin is the only material which will turn the thorns, and it wears for years ; in fact, a pair of ready-made trousers cut short at the knee, when I had sewed the seams up with thread instead of the machine cotton, which gave way in a dozen places in the first week, were none the worse after nearly a year's hard wear.

CHAPTER IX.

Food scarce—A Morning's Shooting—The Draconsberg—A "Stick"—Ride to Harrismith—"All the Year Round" Hotel—Change our Route—Another "Stick"—A Dust Storm—Sunset—The Horses stray.

Wednesday, 17th.—As we had become a little discontented with our slow progress, we made a sudden energetic dash off at three o'clock in the morning, before the stars had disappeared, and treked on till six, when we came to such a likely-looking locality for game, and also so conveniently supplied with water for washing and cooking, that we outspanned. Fresh meat was now an object of interest to us, so immediately after our breakfast of porridge and rusks, A. and I started off with our guns towards a woody kloof or ravine in the side of a range of hills distant about four miles away to the right. We kept along the stream, and for a couple of miles saw nothing; but just as we were turning away to the hills up rose a wild duck almost under my feet, and a charge of No. 6 laid it low before he had gone many yards. The discharge of my gun roused a pair of large blue doves, one of which A. dropped. We continued down the stream, but were not successful in finding more duck, so went off to the kloof.

The underwood was so very tangled, that we soon had to give up any hopes of coming across pig or bôk, and made our way to the outskirts, along which we bagged half-a-dozen more doves; when the sun showed us that it was nearly noon, we started back to the waggons, so as not to delay our mid-day trek. On our way we added to the bag half-a-dozen birds the size of a large thrush, and not unlike them in colour, with the exception of a few yellow feathers underneath their wings. We cooked some of our spoil for lunch, and the brown birds were most excellent, spitted on twigs of mimosa, and roasted over the ashes.

For the last two days the ragged peaks of the Draconsberg mountains had gradually, as we treked forward, been standing out more and more distinctly ahead; our third trek brought us to the foot of the path leading over them. We halted for a few minutes at a little inn, where we had some bread and butter, and a bottle of Cape wine, to give the oxen time to rest a bit, before commencing the very arduous ascent. P.'s waggon was leading the way, but the last pull on to the summit was more than his oxen could stand, and after several futile attempts, accompanied by much panting and groaning they stopped dead, and utterly refused to pull another yard. It is a most unpleasant sight to witness the operations that have to be gone through when the oxen prove thus obstinate; all the drivers collect together, and ply their united whips upon the poor beasts' backs, until few are left free from bleeding wales. When the flogging proves in-

effectual, even more cruel means are resorted to by the drivers, such as twisting the oxen's tails, or rubbing them between two pieces of wood, which creates such exquisite agony that the ill-starred ox, however obstinate or weary, will make another effort. When an ox lies down no torture that will force it to rise again is considered too severe, and a Boer will often rub sand and gravel up nostrils or burn grass in its mouth, if an ox will not move when called upon.

However, in our present case, nothing was of any avail; the waggon still remained immovable, until the other span from our waggon was brought up and fastened on in front, when at the first crack of the whips off went the double team, and the waggon was soon at the top of the Draconsberg. I felt quite sorry for the little Zulus having to turn back and undergo a still harder pull in bringing up our own waggon, while their lazy companions were having the first feed of the none-too-plentiful grass. To use a second span is always the very last expedient resorted to by a driver, for apart from his *amour-propre* being wounded by the inferiority of his oxen thus being demonstrated, nothing has a more demoralizing effect upon the beasts themselves; and if they once are allowed to get into the habit of being helped by a second span, they will soon lose all confidence in their own powers, and refuse to use their full combined strength at any extra hard pull.

Our first trek on Friday (19th) brought us to within eight miles of Harrismith, so A. and myself started to ride in; but we very soon regretted it,

for the discomforts of a howling wind, combined with clouds of dust and a scorching sun, were not at all compensated for by any fine scenery. We arrived at Dodd's "All the Year Round" Hotel in time for dinner, and our ride had prepared us to do full justice to a very plentiful, if plain, repast.

We spent the afternoon in wandering about, visiting the five or six different stores in the town. The Boers of the Orange Free State do not at all approve of the name given to their second largest town, as it is commemorative of an Englishman, Sir Harry Smith, who of all others proved himself the most efficient against, and therefore the most obnoxious to them; but as nearly all the principal inhabitants are English, they can do pretty much as they please, the name still remains the same. Up to this time we had intended to make our route through Potchefstron to Pretoria, in the belief that in that part of the country we should be most likely to come across bôk; but at the inn we met Mr. Percy Whitehead, who assured us that if we adhered to that plan we should in all probability see no game at all. But he very kindly promised us that if we diverged from the direct road and went to his farm of Leuw Kop, we could have some rhy-bôk shooting, and spring-bôk too, if we cared about them. As we had no object in going to Potchefstron, we at once accepted his offer; and next day, not finding anything in Harrismith to either interest or detain us, we started off for Leuw Kop.

As the evening closed in upon us we came to a

broad vley,* as any pool of stagnant water or marshy ground is called. In the darkness our forelouper mistook the trek, and gradually getting into moister and moister ground, the wheels stuck fast in deep sticky mud right over the axles. P.'s waggon was luckily far enough behind to profit by our mistake, and pulled up while still on the firm ground. We borrowed his span to help us out, as the sturdy efforts of our own little Zulus proved unavailing; and, although it is a bad thing to give them unnecessary assistance, it is still worse to allow them to overstrain themselves to no purpose. The two spans soon extricated us from our uncomfortable position; but when we once more found ourselves on firm ground we determined to outspan for the night, as it was now quite dark, and we feared falling into still worse difficulties by persevering. We passed a very unpleasant night, as rank, damp vapours rising from the soaking ground enveloped the waggon in a dense cloud of moisture, which chilled the very marrow in our bones, and penetrated right through blankets and rugs. Next day was Sunday, but nevertheless we had to work the oxen, as there was literally nothing for them to eat in the locality.

The wind was still high, and rolled such clouds of dust up the trek, that we had at last to put down the front flap of the waggon and retire inside; but nothing will keep it entirely out, and after a dust storm a waggon is always uncomfortable and dirty inside until everything has been taken out and well

* Succession of water-holes.

shaken. Towards evening, however, the wind went down, and we had a most glorious sunset. The whole heavens gradually assumed a dark rose colour, and across them drifted dark, cobwebby fleeces, which changed into pure purple as the sun sank lower and lower, until it disappeared below the horizon, leaving only a deep orange glow to mark the spot where it had gone down. The purple clouds became darker and darker as they increased in size, and at length only a few blood-red streaks were left in the ink-black sky, and all was dark, gloomy, and threatening.

When we awoke next morning we found that during the night the horses had strayed away, and were not to be seen anywhere, and worse still we could not make out their spoor, for the ground was hard as iron. We were accustomed, when outspanned where there was grass, to knee-halter them, and turn them out to feed with the oxen; up to this time they had never strayed farther than a few hundred yards, so we could only conjecture that some passing Kaffirs had out of sheer mischief driven them away from the waggons, as they would hardly dare to steal them. We despatched the boys off in every direction, and also went ourselves in pairs, taking our rifles, as one of the boys who had been out earliest saw several spring-bòks about. We were, however, equally unsuccessful in finding the horses or seeing a bòk; and as the afternoon passed away, and boy after boy returned with no tidings of them, we began to fear that they had been stolen; but just before dusk, to our great relief, Jantze returned successful.

He had heard of them at our last outspanning place from a passing Boer, and following the road back, had come upon them just as they were entering Harrismith, and no doubt making for the stables at the inn where they had been treated to some bundles of forage, as oat-hay or barley-hay is denominated.

We lost no time in spanning in the oxen, and set off for a very long trek in order to make up a little of the wasted day. On our road we procured some fresh milk, which was very acceptable, from a Boer whose farm we passed.

CHAPTER X.

The Boers of the Free State—Their Opinions on the Annexation
—Cornelius River—Irregular Meals—A pleasant Boer—Pram
Kop—Snake Stories—The Inchloukga.

THE Dutch of the Free State, in sympathy with their brethren of the Transvaal, cordially detest the English, and as a general rule would do anything in their power to make things uncomfortable for one. Luckily their love of money is at war with their feelings of patriotism, and nearly always carries the day. A traveller with money in his hand need scarcely ever fear being unable to overcome a Boer's prejudices, although if he were penniless and starving, the Boer would not give him a crust of bread, or even a cup of water. Their feelings are not at all unnatural; they only make the mistake of bestowing on the individual the hatred they feel for his nation. No unprejudiced person can consider their history for the last fifty years, and come to any other conclusion than that they have been treated unfairly and unjustly by the English, and that the only law observed towards them has been "that might is right." First we drove them from the old Colony; then we coveted Natal, and forced them away from that. After years of toil, constant warfare, and much bloodshed, they formed the

Transvaal, or Zuid-African Republic, where at last the refugees thought they were safe from our greed ; but to no purpose ; for upon the flimsiest pretext, that they were unable to defend themselves, we follow up our traditional evil policy and annex their last-made home to our already overgrown possessions. Now that it is too late, the effects of our usurpation are perceived, and a long series of petty wars, which will cost hundreds of lives and millions of pounds, looms inevitable in the future with native tribes within and without the borders, all hostile, and only waiting their opportunity to break out and devastate the homesteads around, whether Dutch or English. On the other hand the whole Dutch population are not only resolved to render no assistance to their invaders, but are inclined to throw every impediment possible in their way, even if it is personally detrimental to do so.

Many and many discussions have I heard on the subject, but I never yet heard of any tangible benefit which could possibly result to *us*—I mean the British nation—from our unjust act. It is quite possible that in time the Dutch may be better off under our government than they were under their own, for in the long-run our arms must prove successful in putting down and ultimately disarming all Kaffirs within the boundaries, and affording protection to the farmers from the constant anxiety that at present militates against their undertaking any substantial improvements on lands or dwellings, from which they may, at any moment, be forced to fly, to save the lives of themselves and families,

leaving their stock and capital to be destroyed, and see their life's labour thrown away. Very few men now living will ever see this happy state accomplished, for the population must be increased tenfold, and many millions of pounds be expended on internal improvements, before the land can be brought under cultivation sufficiently, for the country to be even self-supporting.

Wednesday, 24th.—We arrived at Cornelius river, but were disappointed to find the banks too muddy and slimy for us to bathe in it. During our afternoon trek I spied a couple of small heads peeping out of the grass, and on walking towards them with my gun, up flew two birds, one of which I dropped, and it proved to be a kind of small plover with chocolate-coloured body and wings, white breast, and slate-coloured topknot. Soon after, a flock of thirty or forty of the same kind of bird settled in front of us, out of which we bagged another brace; and following them up, A. and myself accounted for six brace between us, which formed a very savoury dish for our dinner.

Meals get very much mixed up waggon travelling, and it is rather hard sometimes to distinguish between dinner and breakfast and supper. One morning we would have our breakfast before starting at six o'clock, then have a regular meal of meat between twelve and one, and a light tea of rusks and coffee before going to bed, at eight in the evening. Next morning we might start off and have nothing till we outspanned between ten and eleven, and have another regular meal in the evening; or possibly have an evening trek

and not get our supper till past twelve at night. At all meals, whatever they consisted of, or at whatever time they happened to be, coffee was our beverage, and the quantity one drinks would alarm a homœopath. A man tired with a long dusty trek of four or five hours does not think much of drinking his four, or even five, pint pannikins full; and it does not appear to do him any harm.

Nearly all men who have spent their lives in the colony have deep black rims under their eyes, and I have often heard it ascribed to the irregular hours for meals which they have to accustom themselves to, but I do not know how much truth there may be in the supposition.

While outspanned at Cornelius Sproot, we met a very agreeable exception to the usual run of Boers. As we were breakfasting a large tent waggon came up and outspanned on the opposite side of the sproot; and its owner, a big burly Dutchman, over six feet in height, with a long beard, and dressed in mole-skins from head to foot, strolled over to satisfy his curiosity as to who we were, and greatly to our surprise addressed us in very good English. We were soon on excellent terms with each other. After he had cross-examined us at length as to who we were, where we had come from, where we were going, what the contents of our waggon consisted of, and what we intended to do, he informed us that his name was Grunweldt, that he lived some fifteen miles off, that he had married an English wife, that all his children were English, and would be most happy to make our acquaintance if we would call in

upon them ; that he would take a glass of gin, and did not think, perhaps, two would hurt him ; but that if he had not been playing cards all night, and had no sleep he could drink a bottle ; that at his house we could have eggs, milk, butter, bread, onions, chickens, and a sheep (almost too fat to eat) ; and that if we wanted shooting his son would go with us and show us any quantity of spring-bôk and blesse-bôk. As time was no particular object, and we only had to deviate a few miles from the straight road to Leow Kop to pass his place, we thought it worth while accepting the invitation, and securing so many advantages. When it was time for us to inspan we said good-bye to our new-found friend, and thanking him much for his hospitality, pushed on across the open veldt, taking for our guiding beacon a curious dome-shaped hill, with a small peaked promontory on the top, which goes by the name of Pram Kop ; we outspanned for the night not far from its base.

Next morning, while at a reedy sprout, we killed the first snake we had come across—a long black fellow with a white ring round his neck, the Dutch name for which is Ringculse ; but as it has a hood which it inflates when angry, it may probably be a variety of the Cobra di Capella. The quantity of snakes in South Africa is inordinately exaggerated. I had heard such alarming stories on the way out, and from the first moment I landed, of men being chased, bitten, and killed, right and left, by huge and deadly serpents, that it was some weeks before I could walk through any patch of high grass or shrubs without jumping at every stick I

trod on, and darting forward if ever a twig brushed against my legs, expecting to see some terrible monster in full pursuit with gaping jaws and fangs about to be buried in me. But during the whole time we were in Natal, the snakes we came across might have been counted on the fingers of one hand. A snake called the *Inchloukgla*, whose existence is somewhat mythical, far surpasses all others in the legends of the Kaffirs and whites, but I never met a man who could say he had himself seen one. It is supposed to be a huge monster from thirty to fifty feet long, and on its head it bears a crest of quills like a porcupine; its strength is enormous, and its bite causes instant death. The Zulus call one of their regiments after this terrible beast, and thus lend more truth to the supposition that some such monster either exists or has existed. There is a very old proverb that the Zulu warriors only take their shields against their enemies, the *Inconyamer* (or lion) and the *Inchloukgla*. In one part of the Transvaal near the Limpopo, the natives all wear stones on their heads to protect them from a tree-snake found there in large numbers, which hangs from the branches and strikes them on the head as they walk in the forests. A gentleman in Maritzburg told me of a curious adventure he had himself seen near that place, when out shooting with some friends. The *bôk* were being driven to them by boys and dogs, who scattered themselves through the trees. Suddenly piercing yells arose in the bush, and on my friend rushing to find out the cause and render assistance, he saw one of the boys rolling on the

ground convulsed with terror, and uttering frenzied shrieks for help. For an instant my friend conjectured that the boy was in a fit, not seeing any cause for his madness ; but as he obtained a clearer view, he to his horror perceived that a huge black whip-snake—of all Natal snakes perhaps the most dreaded, from its deadly bite and extreme velocity in striking—had got his fangs imbedded in the boy's woolly scalp. At that moment a dog belonging to the boy burst through the bush, and in an instant seized the venomous brute by the body. The snake wrenched his head free from the boy's wool, and fixed his fangs in the body of the dog. It had all taken place so rapidly, that now for the first time my friend was able to get a clear shot, and going up close he blew the reptile's body in two, and then turned to the boy, who was beside himself with terror ; but when they—for others had now come up—held him down and examined his head, so as to cauterise the wound, and take the only possible means of giving him a chance for life, to their great surprise not a sign of a bite was visible. Luckily for the boy, his thick crop of wool entangled and stopped the fangs of the reptile before they reached his scalp. They then turned their attention to the dog, but too late, for before they could even discover the wound the faithful beast was in convulsions, and turned over dead in a very few minutes. When the boy had recovered his reason, he could give no explanation of how the snake attacked him. He just felt a sudden blow on his head ; putting up his hand, he felt the snake's body, and then fell on the ground,

partly through fear and partly to try and roll the beast off him. In all probability the snake was in a tree, and as the boy passed he must have either hurt or alarmed the snake by bending back the branches, and then it attacked him as he went under; but I do not think that any snake will of its own accord attack a man, or even turn upon him, unless either trodden upon or cut off from its hole. The puff-adder is perhaps the most destructive snake in South Africa. It varies in length from two to four feet, is of a dirty brown colour, and very thick round the body. Its bite is very deadly, but it is more dangerous from its sluggish nature than anything else, for it will not like other snakes move away when it hears footsteps, but just remains where it is to be trodden on, and then, roused from its torpor, springs backwards and inflicts its bite. To give an idea of the beast's strength of body, I saw a Dutchman with his foot on the head of one, using the butt-end of his gun to job down on its back, but with so little effect, that after two or three minutes, when he removed his foot, the beast made a spring at him, and then before the Dutchman recovered from his jump back to avoid it, the snake crawled off between two rocks, and disappeared.

There is not a bad story told of a new arrival who went to dine with a friend living in the reputed neighbourhood of an Inchloukgla. They had enjoyed an excellent dinner, and had numerous bibulous farewells before he at last made up his mind that it was time to say good-night and leave. Going to the stable he undid his horse, and tied the rope of the halter round his steed's neck, and after a last stirrup-

cup set off on his road home. It was a fine moonlight night, and he rode leisurely along, enjoying his pipe and thinking over the wonderful stories of the mythical snake narrated to him at his friend's table. Suddenly he was nearly thrown from his saddle, as his horse stopped dead short with a jerk, and then sprang forward. Looking round, what was his horror and dismay to see rising up from the ground behind him the long undulating body of what could be nothing else but the awful reptile whose existence he had been poohpoohing only a few short hours ago. Plunging in his spurs, he dashed forward, not daring to look round till he had proceeded some distance at the utmost speed of his horse; but a sickening feeling of mortal dread almost deprived him of power to keep his seat in the saddle, as he beheld the pursuer still level with his girths. On he sped, the horse seeming to share his master's terror, until at last, with a loud hiss, the snake shot past him and wound his coils round his steed's head. His fears overpowered him, and he fell senseless to the ground. When at last he recovered his reason, the horse had disappeared, and he only hoped the Inchloukgla had gone off with it. Every moment expecting the monster to return for him, he hurried home, fear lending him wings, and when at last safe at home he sank down on his bed perfectly overcome with suspense and fatigue. Early in the morning the stable-boy tapped at his door, and came in, saying, "Me come to find out if Boss had come home. Me frightened that Boss had been thrown off." The boy then proceeded to say that on going to the stable he had found the

door open, and the horse inside his stall with saddle and bridle on, but the rope of the halter broken in two and one end of it lost.

Wondering that the horse was still alive after an encounter with a beast whose breath even was supposed to cause instant death, he went out with the boy. To all appearances the horse was unhurt ; not a sign of a bite could they detect, and the only thing injured was the rope of his halter, snapped asunder in the middle.

To this day the hero remains perfectly convinced of the narrow escape he had from a frightful death ; but sceptical persons affirm that our friend having taken more than was good for him before starting, had only loosely tied the rope of his halter round the horse's neck. This coming untied as he rode had trailed down to its hind legs. The horse catching the end of the rope under his hoof had stumbled, and dashed forward startled, and our friend looking down, his imagination, excited by wine and snake yarns, mistook the rope for the Inchloukgla. In his headlong gallop the horse again caught the rope and snapped it, the end fastened to the halter had sprung forward with the suddenly relaxed tension, and had coiled round the horse's head, and was the only snake he had that night come across.

CHAPTER XI.

Coranne—Grunveldt's Farmstead—The District School and School-master—Spring-bòk Hunting with a Boer—Horse's Instinct—An Evening at home in a Boer's House—Whist—A Grass Fire—Leuw Kop—The Lion's Ride—Wool Farming—African Turkeys—A Basuto Massacre.

Friday, 26th.—When I awoke and took my first look out from the waggon, about 100 yards off I saw two birds resembling very large guinea-fowl; not troubling about any clothes I seized my gun, always loaded close to my side, and creeping out of the waggon proceeded to crawl along towards them unperceived, by keeping a large ant-heap between us; but the birds were too wary, and before I was within shot they were off with loud harsh cries of "Coranne-coranne," from which cry they take their name. They are the best worth shooting of all South African birds; as, besides exercising all a sportsman's art to bring them to bag, they are an excellent addition to the menu. They were the first we had seen, although we had often heard them calling in the distance, and our mouths had often watered at the description of their edible virtues.

The whole party were now aroused, and the other two started off after the birds, which we had marked down on a rise ahead of us; but they had a long walk in vain, as the birds seemed to know as well about

the range of a gun as they did, and led them a chase for several miles over a deep, boggy country, always rising just before they could come within range; but on their way back A. killed a couple of wild ducks, so was saved the mortification of returning empty-handed.

At eight o'clock we arrived at Grunveldt's farm; but after his description of a fine farm-yard, comfortable dwelling-house, and well-stocked market-garden, we could hardly believe we had not made a mistake, until a young fellow came out and told us we were at our destination, and that he was one of the sons. The dwelling-house consisted of a low, round, cone-shaped hut, about 15 feet in diameter, built of turf, and the foundations of rough stones. This was divided by a partition of boards run through the centre from wall to wall, one partition serving as the sleeping-room of the family, and the other for the day-time. The roof was thatched with reeds. A sort of box, built with the same dried sods, formed a kitchen behind the house. The walls and roof inside were hung over with onions, mealies, dried meat, skins, and a varied collection of garden implements, whips, rifles, and tools. Close by was the district school-house—a still smaller, oblong hut, about 12 feet long by 6 feet broad, built of loose stones, and a reed roof. In neither the farmer's home nor the academic establishment was there a window of any description, and the only light inside came through the doorway. In wet or severe weather this mode of lighting up a house is attended with some obvious disadvantages; but such a thing

as a window has not yet entered into the conception of a Boer, and what his father put up with does very well for him. Ten or twelve boys ride over every day from the surrounding ten miles, and are taught the three R's and to speak English. The schoolmaster is not badly paid, for he receives 1*l.* per boy a week. Every three months he makes a journey to the nearest village, or place where there is a canteen, and there drinks out his earnings; and when that is gone, returns to his scholastic duties. This schoolmaster is a sample of many to be found, but very rapidly disappearing, in various parts of the Free State and Transvaal also. They are, as a rule, men of more than ordinary education, who have come out from the old country to make a living, but with the vaguest ideas as to where they were coming, or as to how they were to earn their bread. Utterly unfitted for any occupation involving either manual labour or knowledge of business in any form, and ignorant of the habits and customs of the country, they find no field open for their special talents; after spending the few pounds which formed their little capital in waiting for something to turn up, they were left penniless, no nearer any employment than when they came. At last, driven by sheer hunger to do something, they have accepted the positions they now hold, and little wonder at the results to themselves. Far away from any intercourse with men of congenial temperament, thrown amongst strangers who offend every susceptibility they possess, not only by their uncourteous and even contemptuous treatment of them, but also by their

uncleanly habits, coarse speech, and very existence ; cut off from the consolation of their books, and passing months without seeing a paper or a stranger ; it is not to be wondered at that they should seize the first opportunity of having collected a little money to again enjoy any more educated and refined society they might meet in the town or village. Staying at an inn or canteen, they are naturally led into drinking, and soon find it a necessity, and take to it as the means of forgetting their miseries. They gradually sink down and down, till they become even worse than the men they are obliged to pass their time with, lose every relic of their old nature, and even forget their learning, except sufficient to teach the first rudiments to their unruly pupils.

While we were outspanning, young Grunveldt brought us up a basket filled with eggs, milk, and butter, a loaf of fresh-baked bread, some new potatoes and a string of onions, refusing to take any money for them ; but on us pressing him, he suggested that some meal, rice, tea, or sugar would be very acceptable, as their stores were run out ; so we sent down a bucket of meal and supplies of the other groceries. He also offered to have some milk-bread baked for us if we would send down the flour, which we accordingly did, and the bread turned out most excellent, and lasted fresh and good ten days afterwards.

Breakfast over, Grunveldt offered to take us out after the spring-bók, but did not give nearly such a glowing account of their numbers as his father had, and indeed seemed rather dubious as to our success

in bringing one to bag. For nearly an hour we rode along over undulating dried-up veldt, without seeing a bôk. The Dutchman at last pointed out to us two little specks just showing against the sky on a ridge in front of us. Getting off his horse, and throwing the reins over its head as a signal for it to stand, he crept stealthily up the rise ; but the bôk never gave him the chance of a shot, and jumping off, joined a herd feeding half a mile away. As there was now no chance of stalking, for the whole herd were watching our movements, Grunveldt proceeded to give us a specimen of the almost invariable method of hunting a Dutchman, and Englishman too, uses in the open veldt. Coming back, he mounted his horse, and we, following the example, set off as hard as our horses could go straight for the herd of bôk, about thirty in number, who, as we approached them, gathered together nearer and nearer, jumping over each other's backs, and playing about, not showing any apprehension of danger, and I began to think they would let us come right up to them ; but when we were within about 300 yards, off they started at an astonishing pace. Suddenly checking his horse, Grunveldt jumped to the ground, and falling on his knee, commenced firing into the middle of the herd six or seven rounds in quick succession. We copied him, but with little effect, except to quicken their pace. The bullets fell in and around the herd, but always just missed hitting one of them, and the necessity for altering the sighting as they increased their distance made it additionally hard to obtain a steady shot. When they had

gained nearly a mile on us, they stopped, and again awaited our coming, but started off this time while we were about 400 yards distant. Again we jumped from our horses, and commenced a regular fusillade, with greater success, for one of our bullets took effect, and with a high jump down fell one of the flying bôk. As our horses were now nearly tired out, for the sun was beating down on us fiercely, we pursued them no further. Grunveldt, after cleaning the bôk to lessen its weight, tied it over the back of his saddle, and we returned to the waggon, rather disappointed with bôk-hunting, if this was a specimen of what we were to expect.

On the way back A. had rather a nasty fall, through his horse putting its foot into one of the holes with which the veldt is in most parts covered, and which neither carefulness on the rider's part, nor wariness on the horse's, will always be able to avoid. The holes of the ant-bear are sometimes five or six feet deep, and large enough to engulf horse and rider ; but as they are generally conspicuous, they do not prove so dangerous as the smaller holes of the mere-cat, a pretty little animal between a rat and a stoat, found all over South Africa. Any small patch of especially green tall grass should be carefully avoided as it generally contains a hole of either one or other kind, for the burrowed-up earth is the cause of the increased fertility of the soil. As a rule, a horse will of its own accord steer clear of them, and after a very few tumbles it is surprising how quickly a horse, although unaccustomed to the veldt, will learn when to swerve aside from one, or take

it in its stride ; it is always safer to ride with a moderately loose rein, and allow the steed to escape them in its own way, than attempt any interference. The same doctrine applies to crossing apparently safe and dried-up beds of rivers, or other marshy ground ; and many are the accidents I have myself experienced, and seen others suffer, from forcing a horse over ground against its will.

In the evening Grunveldt came up to the waggon with an invitation for all of us to go down to the house and spend an evening with the family, to pay our respects to the English lady, his mother. When we arrived, the whole family of some eight or ten were collected to meet us, and we performed the rather trying operation of shaking hands and saying "how do you do?" to each separate member in succession, as otherwise we should have been considered guilty of unpardonable rudeness. After a rather unsuccessful attempt at conversation, as Mrs. Grunveldt had forgotten much of her English and we could not gather the drift of what the rest of the family said, cards were proposed, and we sat down to a round game of some sort ; but the age of the cards seriously interfered with any exercise of skill, as it was impossible to distinguish hearts from diamonds or clubs from spades. We drank a good many cups of coffee and ate a capital cake. All the men of the party smoked hard, so in self-defence we joined in, and soon the small room was so thick with tobacco smoke that it was impossible to see the other side of the table. At ten o'clock, urging a long day's work as an excuse for an early depar-

ture, we took our leave, after going through a repetition of the hand-shaking ; but I fear we were not considered very polite, as our hosts were evidently expecting us to make a much longer stay.

Next morning we had another try after the bôk, but did not even see any, so in the afternoon we inspanned, and treked off to Leuw Kop, which we could plainly see apparently about five miles distant. Darkness came on before we reached the farm, and presently finding ourselves off the road, we halted for the night. While we were having our supper, a grass fire, which had been lighted three or four miles away, urged on by a sudden wind, rapidly began to extend itself in our direction, and at last came so close that we could plainly hear the rushing flames crackling through the tall grass. We were just on the point of setting fire to the grass around us so as to secure our retreat, when the heavy dew which had been for some hours falling, checked, and then by degrees extinguished, the long line of fire.

Early next morning, Sunday, one of the boys discovered the farm within a short distance, but hidden from our view by a shoulder of the kop. We sent up a messenger to announce our arrival, and very soon the manager arrived to welcome us, as Mr. Whitehead himself. much to our regret, had departed for Pretoria, but had left all directions for our comfort. We inspanned the oxen and went up to the farm to have our breakfast, and revelled in unlimited supplies of new milk and other farmyard produce.

Leuw Kop (literally translated, Lion Hill) takes

its name from the many lions which a few years ago made it their home. Eleven have been killed within the last seven years, but now there are none within many miles. Near the kop is a large stretch of veldt, known far and near as the Lion's Ride, which was once the scene of a very novel hunt.

A very large fierce lion had for some time been making frequent ravages in the flocks of a small colony of Dutchmen who were then encamped some miles from the kop, and at last they determined to make up a party, and, following up the spoor, destroy it. The lion was tracked by the boys into a narrow gorge, thickly grown over with bush. At the entrance to this gorge the Dutchmen drew up their tent waggon, and getting inside to be out of reach of danger, sent the boys with the dogs to the other end of the gorge, to drive the beast out towards them. Some time they waited patiently in the waggon, with rifles ready prepared to salute the lion with a volley the moment he emerged from his lair; but at last getting tired of waiting, they relaxed their vigilance. Suddenly there was a terrible rush and a roar, then the whole earth seemed suddenly overwhelmed with an avalanche, as the lion, driven from his hiding-place, and finding his exit stopped, had precipitated himself into the waggon. But even quicker than the entrance of the lion had been the flight of the terror-stricken Boers, who, regardless of their property, went flying out of the waggon, and scattered themselves through the bush. The roar of the lion had made the oxen aware of the presence of their dreaded enemy; and their noses, ever quick

to scent the danger, had told them how near he was; the crashing and roaring in the waggon behind them put the finishing touch to their terror, and the whole span with one accord dashed forward, and before the lion—now probably more terrified than either Boers or oxen—had time to extricate himself, they were tearing over the veldt at such a pace as oxen never before or since have equalled. The road home was open, and never did the oxen slacken their mad stampede until they drew up panting and dead beat in the middle of the camp. The instant they stopped out leapt the lion, and before any of those who came running out to see what had happened could lay hands on their guns, even if they wished to, the monarch of beasts, howling with terror and dismay, set off as fast as his legs would carry him, and is supposed to have straightway left that locality, as the Boers were never troubled by him again.

Leuw Kop, the joint property of Sir Morrison Barlow and Mr. Whitehead, is quite the best cared for farm I ever saw in either Free State, Natal, or Transvaal. The house, paddocks, gardens, and mealie-ground, are all well walled, and in that is quite unique amongst farms in the Free States. The Boers regard the owners as madmen for going to such expense, but the cattle reap the advantage in having protection through the cold winter nights, and increased prices for their stock more than repay the outlay. When Sir Morrison Barlow first settled down in the Free State, the Boers had so violent an objection to an Englishman being amongst

them that they on two separate occasions made attempts to burn him out ; but by wonderful luck the wind both times suddenly veered round, and the would-be destroyers had their evil plans recoil on themselves, for their own farms were burnt to the ground.

Land in this district sells at about 6s. an acre, including a house of some sort on the farm ; and, but for the difficulty of obtaining a market, would be worth far more. Wool is of course the staple article ; but the wool-farming, like all other kinds of farming, is carried on in a most slipshod manner. There is not a single wool-shed, such as those to be seen on any small farm in Australia and New Zealand, in the country. With the enormous rates of carriage to the coast, in a land where there are no railways, it is impossible to conceive how the wool raised in the interior can ever compete, even if brought to the same perfection, in the world's mart, with that brought from the Australasian colonies, where many of the largest stations have a railroad through their centres.

During the day, as if they were aware of our disinclination to shoot on Sundays, a large herd of spring-bòk passed the waggons within a hundred yards, and stayed quietly grazing all the afternoon within easy range. We also saw a flock of what are called "African turkeys," a black bird twice the size of a crow, with a bald white head and long red beak. They are excellent eating, but very hard to kill.

Of late years they have had little or no trouble

from Kaffirs in the Free State, but the manager at Leuw Kop had a terrible loss, and narrow escape from Basutos before he came there. In those days he was farming on his own account ; a married man, with a couple of children, and a good stock of horses, cattle, and sheep. One night, while in bed, a band of Basutos suddenly attacked the house ; his resistance was in vain ; and while he was defending the door, a party forced an entrance at the back, and assaiged his wife and children before he could go to the rescue. Hearing their shrieks, he burst through the murderers, but only to see his dear ones dead. He laid more than one low before he sprang through the window, and escaped in the darkness, soon lit up with the flames of his burning home. When he returned with a party of friends not a post remained upright ; the charred remains of his wife and family were recovered from the mass, but all his stock were driven off. He had to begin life again and alone : homeless, wifeless, childless, penniless, after having tasted the delights of a happy home of his own. What wonder if a man so treated hates a black skin with a bitter, rancorous hatred, and feels no pity when he sees them writhing under the lash, or being defrauded of their rights ; yet the same man to another white man is as considerate as a woman. Seeing that I was somewhat an invalid, he was as anxious as if he had been a brother that I should not overtire myself after the bôk, and so throw myself back in health, and daily sent me down any little delicacy of the farm, such as new-laid eggs, cream, vegetables, and butter.

CHAPTER XII.

Rhy-bôk Hunting—The Boys show the White Feather—On Trek
—Flogging by the Field Cornet—Wandering on the Veldt—
Blesse-bôk—Squareface v. Old Tom—Boer Dishonesty—
Vaal River—Coranne Shooting—Scarcity of Trees—Watches
useless.

NEXT morning we were up by break of day, and while the others went to the top of the kop to have the first shot at the bôk while they were feeding, I went round to the head of a gully, through which they would probably pass when disturbed. Soon after I had taken up my position, I heard the crack of the Martini-Henry which P. carried, ring out sharp and clear in the morning air, and directly after the duller report of the carbine with which A. was armed, and then followed several shots in quick succession ; but not a living thing approached the spot where I was in ambush. So after waiting until all the firing had ceased, I retired to the waggon ; and soon after the others came down the hill, dragging between them a fine rhy-bôk, about the size of a donkey, and not unlike it in colour and appearance.

The Macatee boys, who were working on the farm, had been frightening our boys with stories of the fighting going on up north, and of other fighting only existing in the imagination of the Kaffirs themselves ; and we could see that the boys were excited

about something as they set round the fire in the evening. Jantze, our driver, first gave tongue to it by saying, as he brought me up a light from the embers, with a woeful expression on his decidedly good-looking face, "Zulu killing all white man."

Quite prepared for him, we replied, "No, white man killing all black man; but we not going where fighting is."

Jantze then proceeded to try and find out where we really were going; but as we did not know ourselves he obtained very little information, except that we would not take him into any danger. The boys showed very plainly that they would not willingly go with us into the locality of any of the fighting, and that not one of them would stand by, if any need of their assistance were to occur. They are nearly all cowards at heart.

Josiah, the other driver, asked me one day to give him a gun, and let him go out and shoot a bôk if he could. I told him to wait a bit, and I would give him one later on.

"But when is that to be?"

"After we are passed Pretoria."

"Oh no; after Pretoria beasts bite. No good sending me to shoot beasts that bite. I run away. I no go to them. I shoot bôk so (cluck), but I no to go shoot beasts that bite."

That is the character of nearly all the Kaffirs except the Zulu or Amaswazi warriors. They delight in slaughter when there is no danger attached; but they are anything but brave when risk attends their blood-thirsty enterprises.

Next day (Tuesday) we were more lucky with the bôk, and managed to bring three to the bag. P. especially distinguished himself by slaying a couple to his own rifle; but rhy-bôk are stupid beasts, and not worth eating when shot. The buck has rather pretty thin straight horns about a foot long, but the doe has none at all. The skins of neither are worth keeping.

It was now time for us to continue our journey, so on Wednesday morning we inspanned the oxen, all the better for their three days' rest and feeding on good grass. We said good-bye with regret to Leuw Kop and its hospitable manager. On our first trek we met the field cornet, who combines in one the offices of magistrate, sheriff, chief constable, arbitrator, and executioner. He was on his way to a neighbouring farm, where he had been summoned to punish a boy who had been insolent to his master; for even in the Free State indiscriminate flogging is not allowed. When a boy proves insubordinate, steals, or otherwise misconducts himself, his master sends over for the field cornet, and lays the case before him, then the boy is allowed to urge any plea he may in his defence, or in mitigation of the penalty. If he is found guilty, the cornet has the option of inflicting either a fine, or corporal punishment. As a rule the latter is given, and the sentence carried out summarily. The boy is tied up to a waggon-wheel; if he has a coat on it is stripped off, and he receives twelve cuts laid on with strong and willing arms. If the cornet cannot come himself, he sends one of his deputies, whose power is

limited to half-a-dozen lashes ; but if a few extra are given, it would be impossible for the culprit to obtain any redress, for probably he cannot count himself, and even if he could the means of redress would be out of his reach, even if they exist at all.

Our wanderings on the day of leaving Leuw Kop will serve as a good example of the indefinite directions, and ideas as to time and distance, which one has to contend against throughout South Africa. Our friend at the farm had advised us to outspan for the night, at a store lately built close by the main road to the drift, where we had determined to cross the River Vaal into the Transvaal. He closed his directions with, "Keep to this footpath and two treks will take you to it, as it is only two-and-a-half hours on horseback."* After two-and-a-half hours good trekking, we outspanned for lunch beside a Kaffir krall, where we tasted Kaffir beer for the first time. It has anything but an inviting appearance, in colour a pale pink, and very thick. It is made of Kaffir corn fermented with various herbs, and has a sour taste ; in hot weather I scarcely know a more refreshing and invigorating drink ; but it is very liable to make a man ill who, not being used to it, indulges in a large quantity. As the path here diverged to the right and left we asked the way from the Kaffirs who had sold us the beer. "Straight over the hill" was all we could gather from them ; but as both paths went over a hill, it did not convey much information to us ;

* This in miles was about equal to fifteen.

but on application at the krall itself, we were directed to the left-hand track. On the top of the hill our path branched off into half-a-dozen smaller ones. While we were puzzling over them, three mounted Kaffirs, riding back from their work at the farm, came up, and again pointed out our direction, and volunteered the information that the store was still two long treks ahead—equal to twenty miles. We kept on until the darkness warned us to outspan for the night, unless we wished to find next morning that we had wandered uselessly on the open veldt; and as there was no water, horses, oxen, and men, had to go to bed thirsty. At the earliest streak of light we were again on the road, but had a long six miles trek before we came to water, and very glad we were to see it, for we had drunk nothing for eighteen hours.

At our halting-place was a small farm, and the farmer, a Boer, assured us that Cooper's store was now only two miles away; but to our disgust it took us a full three-hours' trekking, at three miles an hour, before we at last reached it. There is absolutely no reliance to be placed on distances as computed by either Dutchmen or Kaffirs; for one man reckons the distance by the time he takes riding, reckoning six miles an hour, and another takes his estimate from his ox-waggon at three miles; and another one confuses the two reckonings, and gives the hours by horse instead of by waggon, and *vice versa*.

A Dutchman often has the same indefinite idea as to spelling his own name, and will reply, in answer to "How do you spell it?"—

"Please yourself, mein Herr, it makes no difference to me;" and it is no uncommon occurrence to find brothers spelling their names differently.

While on our way to the store a large herd of blesse-bôks appeared on a hill some way from the road. A. and P. started after them on foot, as the horses were behind us, and by a chance shot broke the leg of one of the bôk. They went off in its pursuit, signalling for me to send on their horse after them. So when the horses overtook the waggon, I despatched a boy with two. The boy missed P., who rejoined the waggon, and as he was absent till it was quite dark, we were half afraid he had bolted with the horses; but during the evening he returned to where we had outspanned, bringing with him the head, skin, and best parts of the meat of the wounded bôk, which he had come across in an exhausted condition; had ridden it down, and finally killed it with a large stone. As we wanted nothing at the store, we did not delay at all, but treked on early in the morning.

Next night we outspanned close to a small colony of some dozen Boers. A couple came down to interview us. We invited them to have a glass of gin, which they of course accepted with eagerness, but were rather suspicious when we produced a bottle of Old Tom, and would not believe that it was gin; for the only gin in use is the Schiedam, sold in square green glass bottles, and generally known as square-face or square-rigger. However, they found no fault with its flavour, and presently proved their appreciation of it by doing their best to induce us to sell them a

bottle, but in vain ; for besides the fact that we had only enough for our own use, prudential motives would have restrained us. The Boers regard the English as fair game for the most dishonest and dishonourable treatment ; and if they had been able to cajole us into selling them a bottle of spirits out of kindness, on the plea that we, as travellers, could replenish our stock at the next store, and that they had a sick man whom it would save from dying, they would think they were doing a very clever stroke of business in riding in to the next town, laying an information against us for selling spirits without a licence, and obtaining half the fine which would have been inflicted upon us. If, on the other hand, we had given them a bottle as a present, we should have had no peace while in the district, for every Boer in the neighbourhood would have hung about our waggons until we had given them the same.

Storekeepers every year suffer a heavy loss with the articles stolen from them, and in some cases even keep a man on purpose to watch and prevent petty thefts of scissors, knives, and any other pocketable articles. So far are Boers from being ashamed of such despicable conduct, that when among themselves they will show their ill-gotten gains as trophies of skill, and boast of their superior sharpness.

Of course there are many Dutchmen who are as honest and straightforward men as exist anywhere ; who regard their word as their bond, and would sooner be ruined than do a dirty action ; and on the whole the Dutch are certainly more sinned against than sinning, even in their commercial

transactions, not to mention their crying political wrongs.

A Boer seldom pays money in a store for the goods he requires, but brings wool or other produce in exchange for it. If he has a large supply he will take half in goods and half in money, and will then lay by the money to invest in more land, or to increase his stock. The storekeepers have two sets of weights and measures, one Dutch and one English; and use one to buy with and the other to sell by, which, in every transaction, gives them a large percentage. It is not done in an underhand manner at all, but is one of the recognized customs, although it is hard to imagine what induces the farmers not to resist a custom so manifestly to their disadvantage.

On Saturday we treked hard all day, and in the evening, just as it became dark, came to a broad, deep-looking river, whether the Vaal or Klip we were unable to determine in the darkness; and seeing no place to ford over, we outspanned for the night.

During the afternoon trek, in a patch of tall grass close to the road, we caught sight of some large birds feeding close together, but could not distinctly make out what they were. As our larder was empty, A. and I took a mean advantage and blazed our four barrels into the brown, when there arose such a hubbub as I had never heard from birds before, and up flew seven coranne; but, to our surprise and disgust, when we went up not a feather could we find, much less a bird, to show that our shot had taken any effect. As we now not only wanted the birds for

our dinner—itself a strong inducement—but also entertained vindictive feelings towards them as the cause of our discomfiture, we saddled the horses and set off in pursuit, for we carefully marked the spot where they alighted. We had marked them down on a little brook to our right, but when we arrived there not a trace could we find; and were just returning to the waggon when up they rose almost at our feet, startling A.'s horse into such a jump that he could not fire, but giving me a fair shot, and one dropped to my first barrel and another flew a short way badly hit by the second. Again we marked them down, and after an unsuccessful search for the wounded bird, which must have run like a racer directly it alighted, we went after the flock, now reduced to five. The birds had this time rested on a ridge of newly burnt grass, where there was no cover, and standing on ant-heaps they could see us approaching, so A. rode a long détour to get behind them while their attention was fixed on me. When he was directly behind them he dismounted and hid behind his horse. I then rode up, and the birds taking wing flew straight over A.'s head, who this time laid low a brace of them. Frightened by the shot, they wheeled round, and one coming back over my head, paid the penalty for his rashness; the remaining two birds, thinking the neighbourhood altogether too hot to hold them, took a long flight, and disappeared over the crest of a hill, where it would have been like looking for a needle in a whole rick of hay to attempt to find them; so, as we

had at all events procured our Sunday dinner, we rode on after the waggons.

Round a small farmhouse on our road we passed the only trees we had come across since leaving Harrismith. Although the Australian blue-green is easily and cheaply procured, and in four or five years will spring up to a fine tree, the Boer farmers cannot be persuaded to expend the little capital and labour necessary to plant them; and although bitterly complaining of the want of rain, only laugh at the mad notion of the Englishmen, that planting trees will probably bring it for them.

All our watches had long become useless, either from neglect to wind them up, or accidents. The sun was our only time-teller, and it is surprising how very accurately a little practice enables one to ascertain what o'clock it is by it.

Next morning, on the other side of the stream, daylight showed us a farmhouse; and on sending a boy over we learnt that we were at the Vaal, and the drift we wished to cross at was just below us. The boy brought us back a dozen fresh eggs, which we made into a sort of fried batter-pudding for our Sunday dinner.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sunday Occupation—Duck-shooting—Crossing the Vaal—Skeletons of Bôk—A Night out on the Veldt—Curious Fuel—Kaffir Coffee.

ON Sundays, as we had plenty of time on our hands, we usually bestowed additional care on the dinner, and varied the monotony of the perpetual stews—which our very indifferent cook always prepared unless we interfered—with birds or bôk, roasted in a large iron pot. If eggs were in the commissariat, we launched out into omelettes or pancakes, not to speak of rice and tapioca puddings. Dried peaches are also a great luxury in waggon travelling; for when well soaked, and then boiled with sugar, they make a very good wholesome meal, with plenty of plain boiled rice. Sunday, too, was our day for washing; but Jantze rather staggered us one day when ordered off with a larger bundle than usual for the wash by saying, “No good, boss, for wash on Sunday.”

It is extraordinary how quickly a Kaffir will take advantage of any religion or custom of the whites to save himself work. The only way to keep the boys near the waggon on Sundays, and prevent them wandering away to any krall there might happen to be in the neighbourhood, was to keep them more or

less employed. We did not let them off their weekly washing, which after all was the lightest possible sort of labour.

Close to our camp was a large sheet of water, and extending to some distance all round it a border of marshy ground overgrown with reeds and rushes ; as we were strolling about in the afternoon we discovered that this was full of duck and water-fowl of every description. Accordingly, early on the Monday morning, A. and myself, on slaughter bent, took up our position hidden in the reeds, one at each end of the valley, so as to drive the ducks backwards and forwards to one another. I had barely settled myself when a large flock of ducks, disturbed by A., came slowly down over my head, and gave me a fair chance to bag a couple. Instantly, from all quarters of the vley, arose ducks, cranes, plovers, ibis, and many other kinds of wild fowl ; and for some minutes both of us were firing as fast as we could load our guns ; but the ducks rose at once, circling round from the centre of the pond to a great height before they came over our heads, and so caused many misses ; but between us we had eleven ducks when we retired to the waggon, besides several which fell where the mud was too deep for us to reach them. As we walked back to the waggon, up rose a fine snipe, almost similar in plumage, but nearly twice as big, as the British specimen, which I dropped just as he was dipping down into the stream ; and we lost some time in picking him out again, as the current carried him past. While looking for him, up rose another,

taking us unawares, and for a time he escaped, as we both missed ; but we had marked him down, and again flushing him, he was laid by the other in our bag. Before we reached the waggon three plovers fell to a volley, as a large flock went whistling over our heads. After breakfast we again tried the vley, but it was deserted by its feathered inhabitants, and we only killed a large snake, which refused to make way for us, and a solitary duck.

In the afternoon we crossed the Vaal, and very barely escaped having a serious accident in doing so. The descent into the river was very steep, and had to be taken at a run. This we accomplished in safety, but with a good deal of exciting anxiety ; then we went a hundred yards down the middle of the stream before taking a turn at right angles out of it on to the other side—an almost perpendicular bit of bank about four feet high. The foreloucher did not bring the oxen up the bank in a straight line, so as to utilise all their combined strength at the right instant, for hauling the waggon up the steep incline, and consequently, only half the span pulling together, the waggon stopped and our hind wheels stuck fast, leaving the waggon almost perpendicular on its beam end. There was nothing to do but to unloose the oxen, and, pushing the waggon back again into the stream, and into a straight position, make another attempt. The instant, however, the chain was unfixed, without any assistance from us, the waggon of its own accord rolled back into the very middle of the river, and splashing into the stream let in a good deal of water.

Our second attempt was not much more successful, and it was not till the other span were brought up to our assistance that we mounted the bank and were on the soil of the Transvaal, and once again under the British flag.

P.'s waggon not being as heavy as ours, and having a better forelouper, required no assistance in crossing from our span, which gave his driver an opportunity to crow over ours.

We met with a most unusual piece of civility from the Boer of whom we had asked, and been directed on the way. He observed that we had mistaken his directions, and when nearly a mile distant from the farm he sent a boy to put us back on the right trek. We were so pleased and surprised at his courtesy that A. and myself rode back to thank him; but as he could not understand a word of English, or German either, and we knew next to no Dutch, I fear he only thought we wanted to get something more out of him; for in reply to our protestations of gratitude he kept on assuring us that he had no more milk, eggs, bread, or anything else of an edible nature in the house. At last, seeing that he had not an inkling of our meaning, and was evidently wishing to get rid of us, we shook hands and rejoined the waggons, by that time outspanned some distance away, as the night was too dark for trekking.

In waggon travelling, like other things, accidents never come singly; so to follow up our bad fortune of the previous day, we again stuck fast in a muddy sprout before we had gone a mile on our first trek next morning, and were obliged to outspan and

have breakfast while we were digging furrows for the wheels out of it. While the waggons kept to the now well-worn track towards Heidelberg, A. and I took a wide tour of the veldt in search of bôk; but although we came across myriads of bones, skulls, and horns of wildebeeste and blesse-bôk, bearing witness to the wholesale slaughters which took place only a few years ago, when the Boers first found out the value of the skins, we did not come across any bôk, although we saw plenty of fresh spoor. The massacres which then took place have thinned the game—to an almost incredible extent for so short a time—throughout the greater part of South Africa. In many parts the veldt is literally speckled all over with the white-bleached bones of the bôk killed only for their hides, and when stripped left to rot away.

The waggons outspanned at the house of a Kaffir who was taking charge of the stock belonging to a Boer, and soon after we arrived the man himself came home, carrying a spring-bôk he had just shot, and from him we learnt that there were plenty of them on the plains behind his house. We all started off after them at once, leaving orders for the waggons to inspan when ready, and proceed along the main road to Heidelberg. A. and I started together, but as we sighted two herds at the same time he branched off after one, and I took the other. As the country was perfectly open, and there was not a chance of stalking, I pursued the method shown us by Grunveldt, and galloped straight upon them; but as they let me get within four hundred yards

without moving, I stopped short, got off my horse, and, sitting down, rested my rifle with one elbow on each knee, took a steady aim at the nearest of the band, and fired. To my delight—for it was my first spring-bòk—I saw the one I had aimed at bound up and then lie over with his white belly showing. I tried a couple of snap-shots at the flying herd, but without success.

As the horse I was riding would not stand the bleeding carcase being put on its back, I cut off the head and rode back after the waggon to fetch a boy to assist in bringing it back, first taking the bearings of the dead bòk's position. I soon overtook them, and brought back Francis with me, taking the precaution, before leaving, to find out the exact route they would pursue for the next few miles, and taking a point, in the direction of which, the main road ran, to ride towards in case we missed the spoor. Before Francis and I reached the spot where my bòk was, the darkness came upon us, and rendered it impossible to find it, even if we were to hit off the exact locality in which it lay ; so returning to the Kaffir's house I promised him a few charges of powder if he would find it in the morning and bring it after the waggon, as we were quite run out of meat, and no other bòk is so palatable as the spring-bòk.

The moon was now well up, and gave us a splendid light to follow our road by ; so we were able to keep up a good pace, and at the same time steer clear of holes, or of the deep ruts with which the road abounded. After we had been riding for

nearly an hour and a half, I began to think it strange that we did not come up with the waggons, as even if they were still trekking we ought to have overtaken them, as our directions for them to keep the main road had been so very plain. There was no doubt about our being on it ourselves, and there was nothing for us to do but continue, so on we went ; but every moment obliged us to be more careful in picking our way, for black clouds coming up over the bright moon left us in almost perfect darkness.

After another hour's riding we saw on our left-hand side a dark object, which to our eager eyes looked like the waggons in the distance, and I began to think how acceptable would be the supper already prepared for us ; but quickly our hopes were destroyed, for it was only a heap of stones and a small bit of wall left standing, the ruins of some hut evidently burnt down, and long deserted by its owner. The place was within fifty yards of where we were, but the darkness gave it the appearance of being far away. The moon was so entirely hidden by the black clouds, and all light so completely shut off, that we absolutely could not distinguish the road from the veldt, and it would have been a useless waste of time to look out for any human habitation. What to do I knew not, and Francis could offer no suggestion, and only made matters worse by ill-omened suggestions of impossible dangers. Where could the waggons be ? Certainly not ahead, for no mortal oxen could have come the distance in the time that had elapsed since we left them. It was just as certain that we had

not passed them outspanned beside the road, for the darkness would only have shown us their fires more distinctly; and besides, we always outspanned so close to the road itself that we must have observed them and heard their voices. If they had turned off the main road, either purposely or by accident, it would be hopeless for us to attempt to find them; and if by accident, there was an off-chance of their discovering their mistake, and coming back to the road they knew we would be on; as we were now at a slight elevation from the surrounding plains, it was just possible we might see their fires, or hear the shots they would fire when we did not return. The Kaffir's house was a full twelve miles behind us, and probably not a house ahead until we came to Heidelberg, forty miles away. As it was now so dark that we had frequently to dismount and light matches to see if we were still on the road, in places where we could not distinguish the wheel tracks by feeling with our hands, the chances were that we should not be able to find the Kaffir's house even if we tried; so as there seemed no other alternative, I told Francis to unsaddle and hobble the horses, after giving them a drink at a small water-hole by the road-side. While he was thus employed, I set about cutting as much of the short grass as I could to make a fire with. Luckily for us the moon emerged from the clouds, and for half an hour gave us a brilliant light; and to my delight I discovered that the spot had been chosen as an outspanning place by a former party, and before the moon again went down Francis and I had collected a fine heap of

cow-dung for our fire. We cleared away a quantity of the stones on the ground, and heaped them up so as to get all the protection from the wind, now very cold and cutting, afforded us by the bit of wall left standing. Francis, in his mortal terror of snakes, did not at all appreciate moving the stones about; and I must confess that he made me jump round pretty sharply more than once with his false alarms and terrified ejaculations.

The former occupier of the spot must have been a great hunter, for, arranged so as to form the boundaries of what had once been a garden, were the skulls and horns of innumerable bœk. If these would only burn we had all the material for a splendid fire, and it was what we most needed; for I was dressed for the mid-day heat, with nothing on but a thin shirt and breeches, and the wind grew colder and the temperature lower every moment; by past experience we knew that there were several degrees of frost every night. We soon had a fire with the grass and dung, and then proceeded to test the combustible qualities of the skulls and horns. For a time they only appeared to put the fire out; but gradually the horns began to smoke and smoulder, then presently broke out in clear, strong flames, and the additional heat communicating itself to the bones, a magnificent bonfire was the result; but they burnt down so quickly, that I feared our supply not lasting out. As the heat made us feel more comfortable, our hunger made itself felt, as we had not eaten for many hours, and Francis was loud in his bewailings. Before starting in the morning, I had

put a couple of biscuits and a piece of betong the size of a walnut in my pocket, and this now came in most fortunately. Giving Francis the latter, I kept the biscuits ; and as the skulls were now blazing up like tar-wood, things did not look so bad ; and if I had only had a pipe and tobacco, I think I should almost have enjoyed it.

We had no means of signalling even if it would have been of any use, as I had left my rifle in the waggon when I went for the boy to assist me in bringing back the bôk. So the only thing was to be resigned to the inevitable, and make the best of passing a night on the open veldt. I used the saddle-cloth of my horse as a sort of coat, and with the saddles managed to get quite a comfortable place to lie down in ; but had to move round frequently, as the side exposed to the air became frozen while the other turned towards the fire was baked. Thoroughly tired out, I managed to get a few hours' sleep just before dawn. Francis, too, fell off, and the fire died away without more fuel being added to it ; so when I awoke, for a few minutes I was too benumbed and frozen to move, as the whole ground around us was thickly covered with hoar-frost. The great charred heap of piled-up skulls looked very grim and ghastly in the dim grey light of the morning.

We managed to get up another fire to warm ourselves at before catching the horses, which were almost as cold and stiff as we were. Saddling up, we rode off at a brisk trot back along the road to the Kaffir's hut, keeping a sharp look-out for the waggons or their spoor. When we had retraced our steps some

six miles, turning off to the left was a disused bye-road ; down this went the track of our waggons, which easily accounted for our having missed them. We went on, however, to the Kaffir's to get our bôk, and at his hut obtained a cup of some horrible concoction, which his wife called coffee, but which, hungry and thirsty as I was, I could not manage ; Francis hunted out a strip of beltong, which he proceeded to roast in the embers, and it sufficed to appease our appetites, as a very little of it went a long way. We then started off for the bôk ; but the Kaffir had made an earlier start, and we met him half-way returning with it ; so we transferred it to my horse and gave him a few cartridges as a reward, for I had no powder with me.

On our road to the waggon I met Josiah, one of the drivers, who had been sent after me on horse-back, and from him I learnt that A. had also been missing all night ; but while he was telling me about it, I spied him riding along a hill a couple of miles away ; and he soon after, noticing our party, rode up and joined us. His night's adventures had been somewhat similar to my own. He had followed up a wounded bôk, not paying attention to the coming darkness, and when he at last gave up the chase had utterly lost all landmarks, and had not a notion in which direction to shape his way. For some time he wandered first in one direction and then in another, on the chance of seeing a light, sometimes fired his rifle along the ground as a signal of distress, until his ammunition was exhausted ; but receiving no response, he picked out a place where the grass grew

long and thick, and hobbling his horse, passed the night as comfortably as he could, but was worse off than I, for he was unable to find any cow-dung to make up a fire with. We were not in the best of tempers when we at last reached the waggon, for it was entirely owing to the carelessness of F. that the waggon had followed the disused path instead of keeping to the high road, as they should have done; and in which case I, at all events, should not have passed such an uncomfortable night. But after a good dinner, and a nobbler of brandy apiece, we felt more disposed to make a joke of what at the time was anything but a pleasant episode.

CHAPTER XIV.

The first Breakdown—Boers on the Scent of Grog—A Snake-hunt—Postage in the Transvaal—A Boer Postmaster—Bargaining with Boers—A Macatee Krall—Daka-smoking, and its Effects.

Thursday, 9th.—Next morning, feeling lazy, I stayed in bed while the waggon treked on; and, in spite of the joltings and jerkings, was sleeping peacefully till Jantze, putting his head inside the fore-sheet, roused me out with the information that a small herd of spring-bôk were feeding close to the trek. I was out in a second with my rifle, not stopping to dress; but I think the bôk were startled at my pink pyjamas, for they suddenly started off at a great pace before I could get a shot. I jumped on my horse and went after them; and an extraordinary sight I must have looked, with bare feet, bare head, and no covering but brilliant pink flannel pyjamas, which I always wore at night to keep off chills or fevers. I was unable to come up with the bôk; and while I was away we had our first serious breakdown. The iron nose to the wooden axle, without any apparent cause, snapped in two, and we were completely done for, without a blacksmith's aid. F. went off at once on horseback to our last outspanning place, and there found out where a farmer, who had the necessary

tools, lived. He rode another twelve miles to the man's farm, but did not return till next day with the mended plate. While we were waiting for him two Boers came up on horseback to buy grog, and brought bottles with them to carry it away in. Our protestations that we had none were of no avail, and they kept on asserting that we had plenty, and that they meant to stop till we sold it them. We could not imagine what had given them the impression that we were travelling publicans, which they evidently took us for; till at last, requisitioning Josiah as an interpreter, we discovered that they had taken the two water-barrels on the back of P.'s waggon for casks of rum. When this was clear, we told them to go and help themselves to as much as they liked; and their faces were a study, as their expression changed from joyous anticipation to supreme disgust, when they became aware that they were filling their bottles with rank water, only put in to cleanse the casks, instead of the much-desired grog. We gave them a tot apiece of the real stuff just to soften the blow, and then intimated that the sooner they were off the better we should be pleased, as otherwise they would have remained for a week on the chance of being given another tot.

While at the water near us, I saw the most repulsive-looking snake I ever came across; about six feet long, of a dirty, black colour, and covered with rough skin, and a large, flat, wicked-looking head. As I had neither stick nor gun with me, and could see no stone, I could not kill it. As I stood watching the beast, which never made an attempt to move off,

it just swung its head backwards and forwards, as if half meditating an attack. Just then P. came up to water his horse, and the beast thinking better of his laziness, slowly retreated into a hole in the bank before we could molest it. We spent an hour vainly trying to dig it out, and then let off a blue devil in the hole, which I hope suffocated it.

Next day we came to a post-office, or rather house where the post-cart stops, and took the opportunity to post our letters of the past fortnight. The responsible position of postmaster was vested in a Boer who owned the house, but this functionary could not tell us the postage to England, as he had never had a letter addressed there before. He only kept penny Transvaal stamps; so, as letters for England needed a Natal stamp as well, we left him money to give the post-cart driver, who, he assured us, would stamp them properly in the first town.

From a Dutch farm we procured some bread at a dollar, or rix-dollar (1*s.* 6*d.*), a loaf, and also a fresh supply of dried peaches at 1*s.* a pound—a very exorbitant charge, as in Pretoria they only cost 3*d.* in the market. The Boer would have preferred to have no deal at all, than to miss an opportunity of doing an Englishman.

In the evening we passed a large krall of Macatee Kaffirs, situated on the summit of a low round hill, and from a distance the sun shining on the kralls gave them the appearance of a large encampment of soldiers, for the kralls were laid out regularly in lines and cross lines. The Macatee Kaffirs are spread all over the Transvaal and Free State, and

from them the working boys principally come. They are the most hideously ugly race of all the Kaffirs. As we passed by their krall many came down to see who we were. Our boys bought from them a large bundle of daka or wild hemp (henbane), which with Kaffirs occupies the same position that opium does with the Chinese, and with equally injurious effects. Its operation on the senses, however, is exactly the reverse of opium. After a boy has taken a few whiffs, he is possessed of the most extraordinary eloquence, and will rant and rave for an hour together, only interrupted by convulsive fits of coughing, as the smoke penetrates his lungs. His ravings will often take the form of violent abuse of the white man, and his "boss" in particular; and it occasionally becomes necessary to extinguish his volubility with a bucket of cold water as a mild preventive, and the boy upon whom his mantle next falls will be wiser and confine himself to imaginary exploits he has performed in battle or the chase. They have rather a curious mode of inhaling the smoke of this powerful drug. The pipe itself is of many shapes and various materials; but the most fashionable consists of a cow's horn, the shorter the better, with a piece of hollow reed inserted in the centre at an angle of forty-five degrees; on the top of this reed is fixed a penny stone ink-pot, with the bottom knocked out, which forms the bowl of the pipe. The cow's horn is now filled with water up to where the reed tube with the bowl joins it, and the bowl is filled with burning cinders, on which the daka is placed. The smokers seat themselves

in a circle, with their elbows resting on their knees ; the first applies his lips to the mouth of the horn and draws the smoke up until his mouth is quite full, and hands it on to the next, who does likewise ; meanwhile, the first has handed to him a pannikin of water, with which he slowly fills his mouth, forcing the smoke down into his lungs ; the pannikin he again hands on to the next, and receives in exchange a long hollow reed, through which he proceeds to squirt the water and smoke out of his mouth ; and so the whole process is repeated from member to member of the circle. The coughing and choking that now commences is almost incredible, and quite indescribable. Suddenly one of them will be inspired with an oration, and wildly gesticulating will shout at the pitch of his voice, or hiss through his teeth for perhaps an hour at a stretch, and it is not etiquette to interrupt him. At last, tired by his own eloquence and succumbing to the intoxicating fumes, he falls into a state of torpor, and another taking up the theme, so it goes on until the whole company are overcome. A man under the effects of daka does not need an audience to talk to, but will harangue the empty air with as much energy, as a full circle of admiring auditors. When under the influence of this baneful stuff a boy is utterly unaccountable for his actions ; and I have seen the quietest best-behaved boy, insolent, threatening and dangerous after a very few whiffs. It is next to impossible to entirely prevent the boys using it, and it is better to allow it to be smoked openly, and so be able to stop it before the effects take a violent form,

than have the boys discontented always and taking every possible opportunity of illicitly indulging in it to excess, whenever they can evade their master's eye. They are very ingenious in their means of using it, and will make a pipe out of anything that may be at hand, from a potato hollowed out and a large stalk of grass, to the fashionable ink-pot ; it is quite futile to destroy their pipes, for they will make shift with a hole in a lump of mud or moistened sand, and lay down on the ground with their mouths to it, rather than be deprived of the use altogether.

A boy once asked me, " Boss, why you not smoke Kaffir pipe ? "

" Why should I destroy my health, and become quarrelsome and ill like you do ? "

" Ah, boss ! it makes everything seem so small, and so far away, and everything so pretty and warm ; his sweetheart also comes and talks to Kaffir while he smokes daka. "

This, in a boy's own words, expresses the effect the daka has upon him ; and so no wonder it has an irresistible temptation to them when wet, hungry, tired, and cold.

Nearly all the Kaffirs we met about these parts were more or less clothed, as they are in the habit of going out to work for about six months out of the twelve, either as farm-labourers or house-servants, and in those capacities a certain amount of covering is necessary.

The scenery became far wilder as we advanced. The hills were loftier and more broken up, and here and there covered with thick brushwood. The

veldt itself was strewn with quartz rocks, and rugged boulders. The streams were full of beautiful quartz pebbles, worn smooth by the constant friction. Many of the rocks have streaks of pure iron in them, and on every side are relics of the volcanic action which must have formed the greater part of the whole Transvaal.

We had expected to reach Heidelberg for Sunday ; but as it was getting dark, and we were still ten miles away, we outspanned by the side of a clear, deep-flowing stream, in an open space between two masses of ragged reef.

CHAPTER XV.

No Coffee—Birds and Insects in the Transvaal—Heidelberg—An up-country Billiard-room—Wild Ostriches—Riding into Pretoria—Letters from Home—Conflicting Intelligence—Mr. White assists us—The Route decided—F. leaves us—The “European”—The Queen’s Birthday—Ball at Government House.

Sunday, May 12th.—In the morning there was no coffee ground for breakfast, and the boy whose duty it was to grind it excused himself on the pretext that it was Sunday. This same boy later on in the day had no compunction about leaving the horses to stray where they chose, while he sneaked away to the Macatee krall, and came back intoxicated when he thought we should not observe him, and when called to account did not mind telling lie after lie in his defence. As this was the second occasion on which a boy had attempted to take advantage of our reluctance to work on Sundays, we made an example of him on the spot, which prevented any more skulking on the part of the others.

The various changes in the bird and insect life, as the day passes on, are very marked and curious.

In the early morning all round we heard the cries of the coranne and partridge, and as we went to bathe very likely put up a couple of wild duck, or disturbed

a bôk come down for his morning draught. As the heat of the day comes on, the game of all description retires to the shade, and is neither to be seen nor heard, and the air is full of gorgeous insects of every size and colour, from the large butterfly, flitting from reed to reed, to the sphinxes and sand-flies, whose movements, as they dart and glance through the sunlight, are too quick for the eye to follow. Darting after these, and glancing like little bolts of shiny gold or silver, set with emeralds and rubies, are innumerable brilliantly-plumaged small birds, who again retire into the reeds when the butterflies shut up their wings as the heat of the sun ceases to warm them into activity. But the cooling atmosphere is far from being tenantless ; for, as the sun goes down, myriads of clear-winged long-bodied flies swarm up from the ground, and after these there dart out from their hiding-places of the daytime a devouring crowd of blackbirds with white tails, who gobble up the flies by the dozen. A larger kind, with gold feathers in their wings, also assist at the banquet ; and a smart little wagtail has a larger share perhaps than either of the others, for he is quicker in his movements, and never misses his dart. When these go to bed later on, owls, night-hawks, bats, crickets, frogs, and jackals, combine together to break the deep stillness of the night with their harsh discordant cries and croakings.

The boys always change their costume for Sundays in some way or other, and they also take the opportunity to wash, dry, and grease themselves. One day Jantze appeared in a red shirt and a pair of boots as

his sole covering; another Sunday it was a hat and a pair of trousers.

Next afternoon we arrived in Heidelberg, and distance certainly lent great enchantment to our first view. Looking down on the village from a mile or two away, it has all the appearance of a pretty, old-fashioned German hamlet, but a closer inspection showed it to be a decidedly dirty and unpicturesque little place. Like all colonial townships it is built with a large square in the middle, in which the Boers have their kirk and school. The English church, and the clergyman's house, are there also. It is a prosperous township, in spite of its rather squalid appearance; and one firm alone have a very large share of the whole wool trade of the colony, and are reputed to turn over their 100,000*l.* a year.

In the evening we were invited to visit the "Billiard-room," which turned out to be a very small bagatelle-board, in a room so circumscribed that the players were much cramped in their play. Attached was a bar; the proprietor, an Austrian ex-soldier, seemed to be making a good thing out of the two combined, as all the youth and fashion of Heidelberg were there gathered together, and 2*s.* a game was charged for the bagatelle.

We started off early next morning, as Heidelberg held out no inducements for us to protract our stay, and we were anxious to reach Pretoria and obtain information which would help us to definitely settle our route. We treked hard all day Wednesday, and from the waggons saw some wild ostriches; but within the Transvaal these are now forbidden game,

so as to prevent their total annihilation. A man is allowed to ride them down if he can, and then pluck their feathers; but if he kills one, he lays himself open to a fine of 200*l.*, or two years' imprisonment, so it is rather like giving a man permission to catch birds by putting salt on their tails.

Forty-eight hours after leaving Heidelberg we outspanned within six miles of Pretoria, having treked in that time a distance of forty-six miles. A. and myself rode on at once to get our letters, leaving the waggons close to a good supply of clear water, and with a canteen and a farm handy for any supplies they might be in need of. The road into Pretoria ran along the top of a reef of iron-stone for several miles, and was very bad riding. The town itself is surrounded by hills on all sides, and we came very suddenly into view of it as we reached the bottom of a long piece of down-hill, and then passed through a narrow opening between two ridges into the plain upon which Pretoria is laid out. The tents of the 13th, on the outside of the town; the fort, situated on a rising ground above them, with the British flag, and the red coats of the sentries, gave it a very military appearance as we rode on past the camp down a wide street opening into the town square. We stopped on our way at the post-office to receive our long-looked-forward-to letters from home. We put up our horses, and as a favour obtained a room apiece at the "Edinburgh," the only hotel Pretoria at present possesses. Although the rooms were very small indeed, and furnished in the most primitive style, we were thankful to get them,

and have a place to read our letters in. That very night we proceeded to make what inquiries we could to ascertain in which direction lay our best chances of sport. There was no difficulty in obtaining information, and we were only embarrassed by the multitude of our advisers, for each advocated a different route ; but we received very dispiriting answers from our informants as regarded killing big game. All agreed that we had come the worst year we could possibly have chosen for a shooting expedition ; and as soon as one man had finished an account of a district where we might expect to kill large game, and be unmolested by Kaffirs, another would come up with later intelligence, to the effect that there was no game at all, and the Kaffirs were up in arms. But by degrees we were able to confine our ultimate choice to two districts—either to the Waterburgh and down the banks of the Limpopo, or else the country beyond Leydenburg, between the rivers Sabie and Crocodile. Ultimately we were decided in our choice of the latter, by the offer of Mr. C. K. White, an old and experienced colonist, to himself accompany us and be our guide to the land of the big game. Mr. White agreed to meet us in Leydenburg on the 1st of July, before when it would not be safe to descend into the low-lying country, which, in the summer-time, from its unhealthy vapours, and malaria arising from the swampy nature of the ground, is fatal to Europeans, although a fine climate for the winter months of July, August, and September. It was now only the 20th of May, so we had plenty of time to spare before our rendezvous ; but as we were

assured that we could have excellent bôk-shooting on our road, we did not mind the delay.

The second day we were at Pretoria our guide F. was obliged to leave us, as important news reached him which made his presence elsewhere absolutely imperative. We were now so used to the waggon life, and had gained so much experience in treatment of both boys and oxen, that it was not of so much importance as it would have been a month before ; and although it would throw a great deal of extra and the least agreeable part of the work on our shoulders, and expose us to petty thefts on the part of Kaffirs and Boers with whom we might deal, we determined to put up with these inconveniences rather than engage another man in his place. .

As the waggons were too far off for us to visit every day, and we were not yet sufficiently sure of the boys to leave them in sole charge, we thought it better to bring them up into the town, where they would be under our constant supervision ; so we outspanned them near a stream of water in a fine open field on the outskirts of the town, where there was a fair feed for the oxen ; I left the hotel myself, and was very glad to take up my quarters again in the waggon.

While we were at Pretoria a restaurant, the "European," was opened, and rapidly cut out the "Edinburgh" in the custom of all those who lived at table-d'hôtes ; and no wonder, for I there had better cooking, better attendance, better plate and better liquors, than I came across anywhere else in the whole of South Africa, outside the three clubs. The two proprietors have put their hearts into the

business ; and, although socially far above the greater part of their customers, are far more attentive and obliging than the ordinary hotel-keepers. I know it made me feel quite uncomfortable at first to have my plate of soup and glass of sherry brought me by one who was formerly first amongst the football team at Eton, and a deservedly popular member of society in England.

On the 24th of May, being the Queen's birthday, there were great doings. A whole holiday was declared, and every flag in the town was displayed. In the early morning a royal salute was fired from the fort by the regulars, and another by the volunteer artillery. Later on the Governor reviewed three companies of the 13th, and the whole town turned out to look on. Three very hearty cheers were given for her Majesty (when the band had played the national anthem) by all the Englishmen, with heads uncovered, although the sun was at 90° in the shade. The Dutch neither cheered nor took off their hats, and looked sullenly on ; but did not attempt any anti-demonstration, much as they would have liked to.

For some days past the stores had displayed large black boards with "white gloves" upon them, and the lives of the various salesmen had been almost worried out of them in attempts to match half-a-dozen different shades of colour with the same material ; and various other signs had clearly pointed out that some important occasion was at hand for the display of an unusual amount of adornment. The night of the Queen's birthday was the long-looked-forward-to festival, for the

Governor was giving a ball and supper in honour of her Majesty Queen Victoria, and all well-disposed people within the colony were bidden to the feast. At nine o'clock A. and myself set off to Government House, and after various hairbreadth escapes from tumbling into the many sloods which intersect the town—as the night was pitch dark and lamps and carriages are unknown—we arrived at the gates, where men of the 13th were in attendance to take charge of the coats and hats, and usher the visitors into a large reception-room, at one end of which stood the Governor; it was not until we had paid our respects to him that we had time to look about us. The large room we were in had been formed from the gravel carriage-ground in front of the house, by extending canvas from the top of the house verandah to the other side and putting cloth on the ground; in the drawing-room thus formed were orange-trees bearing fruit, and various kinds of flowering shrubs, all naturally growing; and from the trunks and branches of several large trees which reached the ceiling, were suspended rows of Chinese lanterns and other illuminations, while a natural hedge of shrubs shut off from the room, like a huge screen, the table where tea, coffee, etc., were being served. Opening out of the drawing-room was the supper-room, likewise formed of canvas, and with the same natural decorations. The ground-floor rooms, with good boards, were thus left open for the dancing, already in full swing to the music of the 13th band, who, placed in the verandah, were equally well heard in all the three

dancing-rooms. But nothing struck me as more remarkable about the whole ball, than the ladies' toilettes.

So far away from either milliners or dressmakers, I had expected to see the most extraordinary attempts at ball-dresses; but, on the contrary, the dresses were as good as at any ordinary English county ball; and while most of the ladies had on really tasteful as well as well-made dresses, there were not half-a-dozen in the room who were not good to look upon. The gentlemen were not equally happy in their costumes, and a London tailor would have gone into convulsions on the spot at the dress-coats and waistcoats there displayed; but frock and cut-away black cloth coats were far in preponderance of the orthodox evening cut. The various military uniforms gave a bright colouring to the scene; and on the way home at two o'clock in the morning, we all agreed that there had never been seen a prettier ball or been one more thoroughly enjoyed than that on her Majesty's birthday, 1878, at Pretoria.

CHAPTER XVI.

Final Preparations—A Dinner-party on the Road—A Jackal Hunt
—The Boys are troublesome—Francis has a lucky Escape—
Poaching Fish—Spring-bòk—Vultures—Kaffirs and Spirits
—Middelburg—Herr Marensky.

WE spent the next week in overhauling our stores and laying in fresh supplies of those articles of which we had either run short, or which experience had shown us were most useful and appropriate. A large stock of "rims," as lengths of prepared hide are called, and which entirely take the place of rope throughout the whole of South Africa; forslat, thin strips of skin used for the whip-lashes, and which drivers wear out every two or three days; and rimpey, a sort of skin string; two or three thick coats for the boys, who had been feeling the cold rather severely the last few nights; more preserved milk, a luxury none can appreciate who have not been obliged to depend for days together upon coffee and meal as the staple article of food; another sack of onions, without which the continual stews soon become insipid; a fresh supply of spirits and tobacco for the boys; and a few additional tools and cooking utensils. We also procured two more horses of a better class than our others, and also some saddlery, both of which we had to pay through

the nose for, as the Government were buying up every horse and saddle they could lay their hands on, for the use of the volunteers serving against Secocoeni.

Every day made us more anxious to leave the town, for the boys were becoming less inclined to go with us each hour, as they heard reports of the fighting in various parts; and as there was a great demand for labour, they knew that they would easily obtain work at high wages, without the possible risk they ran in accompanying us. It was only the certainty of losing the wages they had already earned—and which, following the invariable colonial habit, we were not to pay them until the conclusion of their engagements—that prevented them deserting in a body. It was not until the 3rd of June that we at last fairly got the waggon under weigh, and set our backs on Pretoria. One thing and another, however, had delayed our start till so late in the day, that darkness came on fast as we reached the suburbs of the town, and we were obliged to there outspan for the night. Next day we made an early start; but before we had gone a mile a big dog we had brought for the double purpose of watch-dog, and for running down game, etc., which had shown a strong disinclination to leave the town ever since the previous day, broke the rim he was tied by to the waggon, and made off back to his master's house. I mounted a horse and gave hot chase after him; but all in vain, for he was not to be seen when I appeared; so not caring to delay our journey for a beast which would probably have been more trouble

than he was worth, I gave him up, and rode back to the waggon, firmly resolved to buy no more dogs, but with a very shrewd suspicion that I had been done successfully.

On the way we outspanned at a stream, where there was a splendid orange grove; and the liberal owner gave us as many as we had the face to carry away in a large sack, utterly refusing to take any payment except a pouch of tobacco, of which he had run short. While we were in the garden we spied a covered cart drawn by mules coming along the road towards us, and in it were Colonel Rolands and Captain Carrington, who were returning from a tour of inspection round the various forts and encampments against Secocoeni. As their mules were tired, and night fast coming on, we persuaded them to stay the night and have dinner with us. Luckily we had a large piece of salt beef, which we at once put into the pot, and our dinner-party was quite a success as the beef was undeniable, and devilled sardines made as good an entrée as could be desired. From our guests we received much necessary information as to the safety of the road we intended to take; and it was not until midnight that, with a farewell glass of squareface, we said Good-night and Good-bye.

We felt the loss of F. more of a morning than any other time, as the boys were very loth to leave their warm blankets, and his energetic measures used to hasten them wonderfully. The morning after our dinner I roused them up at six o'clock, but they were so slow and lazy in bringing the oxen and

spanning them in, that it was nine o'clock before we made a start, and we lost all the cool air of the early morning, when the oxen do double the work with half the exertion they expend in the hot mid-day.

Treking along in the afternoon we sighted a jackal on the road ahead of us, so mounting quickly on our new horses we gave chase, and had a splendid gallop for several miles across an open piece of veldt. Every moment we were gaining on it, and were debating on how we should compass its death when suddenly, seeing that escape by flight was impossible, the jackal disappeared into an enormous bear-hole, and left us, helpless and in the lurch; but although we had not caught the jackal, we had so thoroughly proved the speed of the new purchases, that we were not at all discontented with our wasted energies. As we were riding slowly back to the waggon, the horse A. was riding put his foot into a deep hole, and threw him very heavily to the ground. Luckily he was only badly bruised and shaken, instead of having a limb broken, and he pluckily rode on back, in spite of the pain.

As the boys had put us to such inconvenience by their laziness in the morning, we determined to be even with them; so before turning into bed we sent them out to bring in the oxen and tie them up to the dusselboom overnight, so as to be all ready for the early morning start. They obeyed reluctantly enough, but soon came back, saying it was too dark to find them, and at first refused to go out after them again. However, we took all their blankets and coverings for the night, and put them inside the

waggon, and then told the boys that they would not have them back until they brought the oxen. As it was a bitterly cold night, and they were half frozen already, they made the best of it, and in an hour all the oxen were safely tied up. Our measures had the desired effect, for the boys were never again so long about getting the oxen in of a morning, when we afterwards allowed them to run loose all night.

On Thursday we passed through a narrow rocky gorge, very unlike any country we had hitherto been in; but on the other side we came again upon the uninteresting high veldt, with its miles and miles of ups and downs of brown burnt-up grass, with never a bit of green on it to relieve the eye. The oxen were at last beginning to show the effects of never having a really good feed, their bones were painfully visible through their skins, and they had far more trouble than at first, in pulling the waggon, (although lighter than at starting,) up any little hill, or through the deep sand.

Francis, our black cook, had one day as near a chance of a bad tumble as I have ever seen. He was as usual leading the horses at some distance behind the waggon, riding one and leading three others, all tied together with one long rim fastened to his own horse's neck. At a small sprout one of them refused to cross over, so incautious Francis appealed to Jantze to assist him with the waggon whip. Between Jantze and Francis there subsisted a most deadly hatred; so the former, I suspect with malice aforethought, brought down his lash with a tremendous crack across the hind quarters of

the four horses. With one bound all four cleared the sprout, and in an instant were beyond any control, plunging madly forward, and doing their best to get free from the restraining rim. Past the waggon they dashed like a flash of lightning, Francis meanwhile uttering piercing shrieks, holding on with teeth, toes, and nails, and looking the very picture of a hideous orang-outang. We could do nothing to assist him ; and if we could have been of assistance, I fear we were in such convulsions of laughter that we should have been of very little avail ; but luckily nothing serious happened, for the horses soon broke their fastening, and finding themselves free, were not long in recovering from their fright ; and when we came up we found the four placidly cropping the scanty grass by the side of the road, and Francis still speechless with terror, and not certain if he was alive or dead, but very resolute never to ride such a "devil," as he now verily believed my horse "Cricket" which he was riding, to be.

While we were having our evening meal of rusks and coffee, a fierce altercation arose between Francis and the other boys, who, instigated by Jantze, were chaffing Francis beyond endurance on his afternoon's performance ; for he presently drew his knife, declaring his intention of killing Jantze, and as things really looked serious, we had to interfere and make them all lie down quietly, and keep their quarrels for next day, when they would probably be to all appearances as friendly as possible.

On Saturday night we outspanned ready for Sunday by a stream with several fine deep pools,

which looked as if they must be full of fish ; but in vain we tried them with various tempting baits ; and at last, our patience exhausted, we determined to resort to a poacher's trick much in vogue, in rivers where no one ever fishes, and where therefore no sport is spoiled. The apparatus, although very deadly, is very simple. Just a flask of powder, with a long hollow reed containing a fuse, fixed into the mouth of the flask instead of a cork, and firmly lashed over with tarred tow and grease, to prevent any moisture penetrating to the powder. An engine of destruction thus constructed was placed in the pool ; and to keep it in its position, as the pool was too deep for it to reach the bottom, we fixed two pieces of board crossways to the top of the reed. The flask was now some three feet below the surface, and the top of the reed and fuse high and dry, above supported by the boards. A match was then applied to the fuse, and the poachers retired to watch the effects. The fuse took so long to burn that we began to think it had gone out, and were just on the point of going to see, as no smoke was visible, when splash ! boom ! splash ! and the whole pool seemed to fly up in a shower of foam ; and gradually, as it again subsided, and the little waves changed into ripples, the bodies of the slain appeared on the surface, and were caught a little lower down, where the stream bore them. The yellow fish are the usual victims, as the barbel and eels generally lie covered up in the deep slime, and escape the force of the concussion. The bodies of the fish show no marks of violence, and they will often recover and swim off un-

harmd unless promptly pulled out and knocked on the head.

We made a long trek in the cool of the evening, and outspanned again by an excellent supply of water, where we enjoyed the rare luxury of a swim, and then spent the rest of the day in writing letters, for the weekly post-cart from Leydenburg to Pretoria passed us in the evening.

On Monday morning early, leaving the others to see to the inspanning, I rode off on the chance of coming across bòk, as the post-cart driver had seen some on his way down, making in our direction. Before I had gone a mile I came on a large herd of blesse-bòk, but as ill-luck would have it they were in such rough country that before I could get up to them they had made off out of range; but, soon after, on reaching the top of the rise, I saw a nice lot of spring-bòk feeding at the bottom. Instantly dismounting, I threw the reins over my horse's head, and left him where he was; while, keeping on my hands and knees, I crawled along, taking advantage of every tuft of grass or ant-heap. The bòk fed on, unsuspecting of the approaching danger, till out of a tuft of grass just in front of me flew a couple of coranne, whose harsh cries instantly alarmed the bòk. However, I was now within 400 yards, and had my rifle ready sighted; so squatting down, I had time for a long, steady aim, while the spring-bòk were making up their minds which way to run, and had the satisfaction of seeing one left behind as the herd dashed away at the report of my rifle, following one another in a long line, jumping and hustling over each other.

Four more shots I had before they were out of sight, but only one told. However, I was quite pleased with my morning's work, and rode back to get an extra horse to bring the two bôk back, taking off a haunch of the fattest to have cooked at once for our dinner. P. accompanied me to assist in skinning and cleaning the game before putting them on the horse. As we approached the spot where the nearest bôk lay, we perceived a large flock of vultures hovering over the spot, and hastened our pace, so as to be there before the foul birds could lay their polluting touch on the meat. As we came nearer they gradually soared higher and higher, until they disappeared in space ; but what was our astonishment, on arriving at the exact place where I had left the first bôk not an hour before, to find nothing remaining of it but the skull and a few of the larger bones. At first I thought I must have made a mistake ; but there were my tracks and the empty cartridge-cases to put it beyond doubt. Of the second bôk there was even less, for only two leg-bones remained to show that he had ever existed. Although done before our eyes, so to speak, it yet seemed incredible ; but on telling the story afterwards to a Boer, he not only expressed no surprise, but said that he had several times shot a spring-bôk at a long range of 800 or 900, and before he could ride up the vultures had swooped down and rendered it unfit for food.

It is a most marvellous thing how the rapacious beasts gather together, as if by magic. There is not a speck upon the sky, and the clear atmosphere enables one to see an enormous distance ; but let a

bôk be killed, a horse or an ox die, or lie down by the side of the road, and in two minutes a vulture will be seen overhead, and within five, long lines will appear on the cloudless sky, all hurrying up to the feast. It does not require a bôk to be killed for the vulture to put in an appearance; the instant a shot is fired at game, above the herd they appear mere specks in the sky, but still there, waiting either for what the hunter will leave of anything he may kill, or marking with unerring eye where the stray bullet may wound. They will follow the wounded beast until it sickens, and, either dying or through weakness, falls a prey to them.

Doubtless they act as scavengers, and as such are unmolested, for in that capacity they are thoroughly efficient, and nothing can be too small or too repulsive to be left by them. I have often been inclined to slaughter some of the disgusting beasts when I have come upon them by the side of a dead horse, cow, or buffalo, too gorged to do more than flop lazily out of my way. Hunters have many devices for keeping them off the killed animals. If there is an ant-bear hole anywhere near, the safest plan is to put the carcase into that, and strew a little earth or grass over the top of it. But in default of an ant-bear hole, a few twigs of bushes bent right across the body, and a few more stuck upright about the legs, will suffice to keep the birds off for several hours; but after that time, as they get bolder and bolder, one of them will alight on the body, and when he receives no harm from the make-believe trap, the others soon gather courage and join in the

feast. I have kept them off for a whole day and night by fastening a few strips of white paper on to the twigs. But white paper, or any substitute, is not at all a usual article for a hunter to have handy, and occasionally there are neither holes, twigs, nor grass to be found near the place. The best chance, in that case—but it is only a chance—of keeping the vultures off, is to tie the legs together with a strip of the skin, and bend the neck and head between the fore legs. This gives the animal an unnatural appearance; and the birds, on the look out for danger, will sometimes think it is a bait, and leave it unmolested. The same means will preserve it from lions or jackals, if the additional security is used of firing off the rifle along the ground on each side of it, which gives the grass and earth the smell of the burnt powder, and which at once warns animals with noses that all is not right.

We made a trek in the evening to Honey's Hotel, where we gave the boys all round a stiff glass of spirits, to warm them up for the night trek we meditated into Middelburg. It is quite extraordinary the unconcerned manner Kaffirs, when quite boys, will drink the fiery compounds called spirits. Our foreloupier, whom the other boys have dubbed "Wilbeeste," from his rough, unkempt appearance, was only about sixteen years old; so, when it came to his turn for the half-tumbler of peach brandy, resembling nothing in taste but a concoction of petroleum, prussic acid, and cayenne pepper, we suggested the advisability of his diluting it with a little water; but with a most energetic "Tykar, boss" (No), he

swallowed down the poisonous liquid in a couple of gulps, and dashed outside, uttering an elfish yell of mingled pain and pleasure. The one quality a Kaffir thinks necessary in spirits is that it should burn his throat, and he only judges its excellence by how severely it tries him at the time, and how long after it is down the effect endures.

After the boys had finished their "povsas," we set off again for, and reached, Middelburg at 12.30. There was so little light that we could not see where to outspan, but just tied up the oxen to the dusselboom on the first open space we came to; and when morning came, we found we could not have done better, for we were in the market-square, or rather what will be the square at some remote future period. At present, the town consists of one long row of houses, and a few others scattered here and there, but not above fifty in all. The principal of these consist of six stores, a couple of canteens, a post-office, church, and blacksmith's shop. A detachment of the 13th, under Captain Persse, were encamped just above the village, and from him we received every hospitality and a great deal of information about the game in the neighbourhood. During the morning we went into Mr. Wemner's store to buy a few necessities, and seeing some bottles of beer, and glasses all handy, at once ordered a bottle, as we had not tasted any for some time. We finished the first, and Wemner pressed a second on us, which we ordered, although we did not much want it. On leaving the store, we were very much surprised when he absolutely refused to take pay-

ment for it, alleging that he never sold any liquors to be drunk on the premises. As beer costs 5s. a bottle there, and our purchases had been very trivial, we were rather loth to avail ourselves of his kindness, but as it was his usual custom, it would have insulted him to insist too strongly upon paying.

In the afternoon we rode up, to pay a visit to Potsabelo, the Berlin mission station, and to call on Herr Marensky, the pastor in charge; unfortunately our time was so limited, that, much to my regret, we had to take our leave before we had half satisfied our curiosity; but Herr Marensky most kindly invited me to pay him a visit on the following Saturday, and, by staying till Monday, have a full opportunity of seeing the full working of the station.

While at dinner in the camp, Captain Persse offered to accompany us early next morning to a farm belonging to a Mr. Hartogh, about twelve miles distant, where we had received information that there were large herds of spring- and blesse-bôk.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Chase after Blesse-bôk—Mr. and Mrs. Hartogh—Countless Herds of Bôk—Orebi—Salt-pans—Pig—A Cropper—Buck-jumpers—Mere-cat and Kite—Potsabelo Mission Station.

NEXT morning, as we were starting, Captain Persee's servant came down, bringing with him six dogs, greyhounds and deer-hounds, for us to take with the waggon, and a message to the effect that his master would join us on the road. The dogs delayed our trek very considerably, as they took every occasion of fighting each other, and getting into such an entanglement that we had constantly to halt the waggon before we could set them free, only to begin fighting afresh. We had intended to reach the farm in one trek, but the oxen showed such evident symptoms of fatigue that we were forced to outspan half-way. While outspanned we saw a very large herd of spring- and blesse-bôk together, but were not able to get within range. Soon after Captain Persse joined us, and after a snack of lunch, he and A., taking the dogs, set off over the veldt in search of the bôk. I stayed behind to bring on the waggon, as P. had not been able to leave Middelburg at the early hour we started. Before we had gone a mile a herd of many hundred blesse-bôk came over a hill

towards the waggon. I jumped on my horse, but the country was so rough that I could not get a fair chance before they were out of range, and I returned to the waggon rather disconsolate; but I was soon cheered up, for straight down the path towards us came a still larger herd at full gallop, driven by the other two. I was on my horse again in an instant, and this time succeeded in hitting a fine old ram who was heading the herd, but only broke his leg. He turned off from the rest and made off as fast as if unhurt, in the opposite direction, with me after him, but for three or four miles I gained very little on him, as the ground was unfavourable for galloping. To all appearances the old bök was not travelling faster than a slow horse's trot, but his shambling canter kept him well ahead of me over the broken ground, and on he went, never showing a sign of fatigue. At last the veldt changed its character, and instead of a hard, uneven surface, broken up with broad, deep hollows, and numberless ant-hills, a stretch of, to all appearance, smooth springy grass extended away in front. Now was my time; and touching "Cricket" with the spurs, I increased the pace so much that the bök evidently began to tire, and before long I was within fifty yards of him; the horse seemed to catch the excitement and raced up almost alongside, when just in front appeared a huge bear-hole. Very cleverly Cricket jumped it in his stride; but the ground was rotten on the far side, and catching his fore feet in the deep loose soil, over we went, horse and rider turning a complete somersault. Luckily it was soft falling, and

I was not long in picking myself up, and to my relief found my rifle uninjured. I looked round for the bôk, and was surprised to see it just laying down on a bit of high grass not 300 yards away, and too exhausted to get up when I rode close to it and jumped off; but as I walked alongside and was pulling out my knife to give it the *coup de grace*, up it jumped, and charging straight at me, before I could get out of its way, it was upon me, and I was again sprawling on the ground, but not a bit hurt; before it had gone many yards past me I put another bullet through its heart, which brought the bôk down without a struggle.

As the waggon was not a great distance off, and my horse too tired for the extra burden, I returned and sent off a couple of boys with another horse to bring the dead bôk in.

While we were waiting Persse rejoined us on foot, his horse, a young one, having broken away at his shot, and left him unable to follow up a blesse-bôk he had mortally wounded. I despatched Francis on horseback after the runaway, but it was midnight before he came back with it to us, by then outspanned close to Mr. Hartogh's farm. As all the boys who knew how to cook were engaged, we set to and prepared our own dinners: grilled bôk steak, fried liver, boiled rice, and a supply of fresh milk, butter and bread from the farm—such a dinner as would not have been bad at any time, but which our long hard day's work made a most sumptuous banquet to us.

After dinner we proceeded to pay our respects to Mr. and Mrs. Hartogh and their family at the farm,

who received us in the most hospitable manner possible to conceive. Mr. Hartogh told us that we were to stay as long as we were able, to use his house as our own, send to the farm for everything we wanted, and that nothing would please him and Mrs. Hartogh so much as our asking them to have meals ready for us at any time we could come in and join them. At ten o'clock we said Good-night, after a parting glass of square-face and some slices of most excellent seed-cake for supper.

Next morning, while breakfast was being cooked, Persse, accompanied by A., went out with the dogs to find the bôk he had wounded the previous evening; but the vultures had been beforehand with them, and they only discovered the carcass by seeing a long string of the birds flying off from the remnants of the feast. On their way back they had a capital course with another blesse-bôk, and after a hard run the dogs pulled it down; but the ground was so hard, and the short dry grass so prickly, that all the dogs had sore feet at the finish, and were useless for more hunting.

We had constantly heard descriptions of the numberless myriads in which the various antelope, at one time were to be seen all over the high veldt, and even yet in some of the less frequented parts of it, but we had always received these stories *cum grano*. In the afternoon, while riding round, more to get an idea of the surrounding country than after game, I came upon a sight which more than vindicated the veracity of all those whom we had ignorantly put down as exaggerators. I had been riding slowly up

the slope of a high ridge, at the foot of which, on the other side, ran the river, forming the boundary of the farm ; I had not seen a single bòk of any description, but when I reached the top a sight met my eyes which fairly took my breath away. For many miles a plain stretched away before me, with the river winding through it, and on this plain were countless thousands of black specks, in places so thick as to hide the grass completely. I could hardly believe my eyes that they were really living animals ; but it was beyond doubt ; and presently, as I began to descend, preparing my rifle and cartridges meanwhile, those nearest to me began to form a long dense black line, miles long, and rapidly to retreat.

For some time I watched, from where I was, the herds gradually forming into one huge, compact mass ; but then, so as not to allow them too far a start, I galloped off in pursuit. The blesse-bòk went first in dull-brown lines, and behind them came the spring-bòk, yellow one moment and white the next, as they turned to the side, or exposed their fan-like white quarters.

I was not long in securing one of the latter ; and as I could not carry more if I shot them, I watched the herds retreating to the next rise, where they halted, and stood watching me. Before the wholesale slaughters by the Boers, at the seasons when the bòk were changing their summer or winter quarters, it was no uncommon thing for a waggon to have to pull up for an hour at a time while the herds crossed the path in front, and quagga, wildebeeste, blesse-

bôk, and spring-bôk, went past in such crowding masses that they never swerved as shot after shot was fired into the line; but that is a thing of the past. The bôk are now so wary that, however big the herd, it is no easy matter to get within shot unless on horseback, for the open country they frequent almost invariably puts stalking out of the question. The herds used to be in such dense numbers that only the foremost could get a bite of the grass, and these soon became fat and gradually lazy, when they were forced out of the van by the hungry, active bôk behind, who in their turn, by over-indulging in the rich feed, were unable to keep their places, and again took their position in the rear. Numbers were trampled to death in the rush to the front, and many more starved, unable to fight their way. Antelopes, just like men, always ill-treat the weak and helpless; and the moment one of their number is wounded or taken ill, the others set upon and fight him to death. Perhaps it is a wise instinct which teaches them that disease may breed disease; but I think it is more likely the natural brutal impulse of the strong to oppress the weak—a sort of “kick him now he’s down” feeling.

In the evening Captain Persse left us, and early next morning we were joined by another officer of the 13th, also quartered at Middelburg.

Directly after a breakfast of splendid pork sausages, sent us down as a present by Mrs. Hartogh, he and I started off for the reedy muddy banks of the river, where we were told we might expect to come across pig. We carried our guns with us, and

cartridges loaded with ball in one barrel and shot in the other, so as to be ready for anything. We sent Jantze to meet us and follow down with our rifles and ammunition, so that if unsuccessful at pig we might have a turn at the blesse-bôk. We beat the banks on both sides for several miles without seeing spoor of a pig, and indeed nothing living but a large iguana, which escaped into the water on our approach ; and so giving up the idea of "pork," we made for Jantze, and exchanged our guns for the rifles. Before we had gone a hundred paces a small herd of blesse-bôk passed us, one of which we wounded. Following it up at a fast gallop, we were soon near enough for my companion to drop him. As Jantze was near, we left him with instructions to "plant" the bôk in a bear-hole, or to protect it from the birds with sticks, and then go to the waggons and get a horse to carry it on. We then went off over the veldt, and after missing several running shots at Orebi—a small yellow bôk, the best eating of any antelope—which we put up in the long grass of the Pans (as dried up, broad, shallow ponds are called), we came upon another large herd of blesse-bôk, but so far off that it was more out of a wish to try my rifle than with any hopes of hitting, that, putting up the 800 yards sight, I sat down and fired at one old fellow who, standing on an ant-hill, seemed to be in command of the herd. From where I was I thought he had gone on unharmed with the rest ; but my comrade from his horse saw it fall, and on galloping up we found such a fine fat bôk that we determined to take his skin, head, and a haunch

home with us. Our knives were both blunted, and his skin was extra tough, so it was over an hour before we had a haunch and the liver tied up in the skin, and safe on the back of my horse, and the head and horns in front of the saddle.

As we were riding quietly home, some way ahead we saw five objects which looked so like ant-heaps, that it was not until they began to move off that both together we cried out "Pig!" As it was too late then for any chance with the rifles, we set off and tried to race them down. I soon found that the dead weight of the bôk was telling on my horse, so I cut it off with my knife as I galloped on, and before we had gone a hundred yards I saw a vulture swoop down on it. Nearer and nearer we came to the pigs, and were able to hear their grunting; when, as if by magic, they disappeared from our view just in front of us, and in another instant we were very nearly going down after them into a regular net-work of bear-holes which the crafty pigs had been making for the whole time. The sun was now getting low, and we had a long ride before us; so anathematizing the pigs in the hole, for which we had lost the bird we had in our bag, or rather the haunch of fat bôk we had on the saddle, we made our way to the waggons. On our road my friend to all appearances shot a spring-bôk, but when we rode up it sprung on its feet again and made off, as if it had never been hurt; our horses were far too beaten to run it down, so we left it to the vultures. Francis had roasted in the pot a haunch of larded bôk sent us from the farm, and to us it tasted better than any

venison ; but perhaps the situation gave it additional flavour, and all the world over hunger is the most piquant sauce. I am sure that no epicure or gourmet however enthusiastic, ever had the same pleasure in the choicest dishes and wines, with every appurtenance of the table, as we had in our tough steaks fried in water when we had no fat, washed down with coffee and preserved milk.

Next morning before breakfast A. killed a klip-springer — a pretty little bôk, with a body no bigger than a very large hare's, but legs a foot and a half long. My friend of the 13th and I then set off for Middelburg. Before we had gone 100 yards I had rather a nasty fall, which taught me never again to trust to one of the boys to saddle my horse for me. I was riding one horse and leading another with a few necessaries in saddle-bags strapped on to it. The led horse took a sudden fright and bolted off, kicking furiously. In trying to hold it back, the weight proved too much for my girths, not half tightly strapped up, and the saddle suddenly turned top underneath and I with it ; but in falling the reins slipped up my arm, and I was dragged some way along the ground, and put my little finger out of joint before I could get loose. The horse, once free, twisted and kicked to such advantage, that he got rid of all his packages and quietly bolted back to the waggons, rather pleased with his performance, and it was nearly an hour before we again were on our road. The horses of South Africa have an unenviable reputation for buck-jumping, but I think by degrees the vice is being eradicated, and I never saw a horse

there which could for an instant compare with the buck-jumpers of the Australian colonies, where I myself once saw a horse, on leaving his stable, perform an almost incredible acrobatic feat. He first put his head between his fore legs and his tail between his hind ; then, arching his back almost to a semicircle, he began the most violent jerky springs straight up in the air, and then a side one as variety. First he broke the crupper ; the saddle at once canted forward, but his rider remained on until the saddle gradually was worked almost to a horizontal position on the vicious beast's neck, when, having no hold, an extra jerk sent him over sideways. In a few more bucks the saddle was right off and lying on the ground, uninjured, with the exception of the broken crupper.

On our way in we stopped some minutes to watch a kite chasing a mere-cat, which had incautiously wandered some distance from its hole. At each downward dart of the kite, the mere-cat would make a backward spring, and, before the kite was ready for another swoop, would have gained several yards nearer home ; and then the same process would be repeated ; but the kite was never crafty enough to alter his tactics, and after a dozen hair-breadth escapes we felt quite glad to see the pretty little beast, after such a gallant display of endurance and pluck, escape its pursuer and vanish into its subterranean hiding-place.

I had lunch at the camp, and left one of the horses there before riding up to the Mission Station, which I reached at five o'clock, and was met, at the door of his

house by Herr Marensky in person, who, after I had seen my horse stabled, took me into his little study to get a cigar and cup of coffee before accompanying me in a stroll round the workshops, which would be closed on Sunday. We first visited the blacksmiths, where probably the best work in the Transvaal is turned out. There is only one European, a German, in the shop as master and overseer, and the same applies to the waggon-making, and general carpenters' shop. All the work is performed by the Kaffirs themselves, many of whom are thoroughly efficient smiths and carpenters. About twenty boys are constantly employed in the shops, and when there is a press of work there are twice that number, who are competent to do the rougher kinds of work. The master smith and master wheelwright have each of them substantial well-built dwelling-houses close to their work, and I expressed my surprise to Herr Marensky at their having had the means at hand to build such excellent houses, for they far surpass the best houses in Middleburg; but he answered me with an English proverb which well expresses the spirit which pervades his whole policy and management: "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well."

We returned to the house to get ready for tea. I was shown to my bedroom, opening out of the little courtyard attached to the back of the house. A snow-white little bed, a carpet of spring-bôk skins sewn together, a ewer and water-jug, were the sole furniture, and on the wall hung a roughly-painted sacred picture. At tea I was introduced to Herr

Marensky's wife and family ; and a very kindly welcome they gave me, and took every opportunity of showing me any little attention, besides taking the most lively interest in our plans, which I discussed at tea with the Herr Pastor, as there is no man in the Transvaal who knows better the temper and probable movements of the Kaffirs. I was also anxious, if possible, to obtain a boy from him as a guide, who was acquainted with the district and other tribes we might meet. On learning my wish Herr Marensky at once sent down into the village below for a man who he thought would suit me, and who had very lately returned from the very district we intended making our head-quarters. After tea the pastor took me back again to his sanctum, and after presenting me with another excellent cigar—one of a box lately presented to him by a gentleman he had nursed gratuitously through a long fever—he proceeded to give me some account of the station from its beginning, and which made a great impression upon me at the time, as much from the clear, straightforward matter-of-fact manner, which left not a shadow of a suspicion as to the minute veracity of every word he uttered, as from the indomitable pluck and perseverance that had been characteristic throughout of the missionary and his little band.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Herr Marensky's early Troubles—The Settlement—Population—System of Conversion—Government—Sunday Attack—Polygamy—Stores—Personal Property.

TWENTY years ago the pastor, first with only one companion, settled down in the territory, and close to the head krall of Secocoeni, and for some months he was in great favour with that chief, until the numbers of those who flocked to him—more, as he is the first to own, to obtain protection and means of making a quiet livelihood, than with any thought or care of becoming Christians—made Secocoeni jealous of the new power. For a couple of years he was exposed to nothing worse than petty annoyances; but at last Secocoeni, growing alarmed at the steady increase of the little colony, ordered him to quit his territory. Herr Marensky, however, managed to conciliate him, and obtained his permission to stay on, the chief perhaps being more influenced by the wishes of many of his principal head men (Indunas), who had received benefits from the medical skill and remedies of the missionary, and whom they regarded as a great medicine-man, than from any goodwill towards the pastor himself. The third year passed peacefully away, and Herr Marensky had now been joined by his wife; but there arose many slight squabbles,

until at last came a climax, in the demand for a fugitive, whom the missionary refused to give up to the messengers from the chief. Next day a large party, led by two Indunas personally unfriendly to Herr Marensky, surrounded the house, and in the most threatening manner demanded not only the fugitive, but also that the missionary should accompany them to the krall. On his refusal they forcibly searched the house and neighbouring kralls for the man, killing many of the harmless inhabitants, but failed to find him they sought, for he was hidden under the bed on which Frau Marensky, in a very delicate state, was lying. As Herr Marensky had gathered from their behaviour that they were not now authorized to kill him, he assumed, a still bolder demeanour, and after soundly rating them for their cruel behaviour, sent a message by them to their chief that he could not leave his wife to visit him. The party then returned to the chief's krall; but just before night the pastor received a message from an Induna whose life he had saved, and whose integrity he could rely on, that his house was to be surrounded, and himself and family slain before morning. Luckily he had a couple of horses at hand, left by a German farmer who was himself only some twenty miles away, across the stream; so after calling together all the natives, he told them to join him as best they could, beyond the river; and putting Mrs. Marensky on one horse and mounting the other himself, he set out for the ford. Before they had gone many miles the flames announced that the Kaffirs were at their deadly work,

and more than half the inoffensive station boys were butchered before they had time to make good their escape. The horrors of that night are still too vividly before his mind for the pastor to speak lightly of them : his wife in a fainting condition, and unable to sit her horse without support, and the yells of the pursuing demons ringing in his ears, before at last the river was reached, and only just in time, for a heavy flood was coming down and the channel was already swollen and dangerous. Some of his own boys were there before him, and with their assistance his wife was brought over in safety ; and that very night, as the stars were giving way to the morning, his eldest child was born ; and before his pursuers reached the stream it was a huge cataract, with masses of turbid water bearing down rocks and trees in their furious course, and utterly impassable by man or beast.

For many weeks he and his wife were protected and cared for by his compatriot. Everything had been left behind in his flight, and they were homeless and penniless, but anything but hopeless or repining, and he soon fixed upon the spot where the station now rests for another attempt, and had soon gathered the remnants of his little flock around him at the new home, where they were speedily joined by other fugitives from the surrounding chiefs. Thirteen years ago there was nothing but a barren waste ; now he has a fine church—certainly the finest in the Transvaal—600 acres under cultivation, stores, dwelling-houses, workshops, and a huge native village, all built by himself and the Kaffirs. The Society

owns in all 39,000 acres of land. 30,000 acres cost them 500*l.*, and the 6000, of which the station and most of the cultivated land form a part, cost only 758*l.*; there are besides 3000 acres which have been bought, but not yet paid for, by the natives themselves.

The total population of the station is about 1600, of whom 1029 are baptized, 168 are under instruction, and 359 are children at school.

Herr Marensky could, if he chose, baptize every man, woman, or child in his village; but he makes baptism the reward of a good and virtuous life, and not easy to be obtained. Children of Christian parents are naturally baptized as soon after their birth as convenient. The work of conversion is carried on almost entirely by the old converts; but, the pastor observed, "More is done by example than by anything else." When a stranger comes and announces his wish to join the community, he is at once given a piece of land, and is assisted to build his krall, and is given land to till, and seed to sow in it. But he is made to clearly understand the laws of the community: that idleness will not be allowed, and will be visited by expulsion; that theft will be punished by lashes and expulsion too; drunkenness, the first offence a flogging, and the next a still more severe flogging, and expulsion into the bargain; smoking daka is also visited with heavy penalties. After a time the new comer will naturally have his curiosity aroused by the, to him, mysteries of the Church, and the altered subjects of conversation amongst the baptized; and, little by little, will him-

self wish to learn something of the knowledge which he sees makes the others enjoy life in a way that is utterly strange and new to him. He will also wish to be able to understand the curious signs he sees the others reading, and to share in the ideas which enable his associates to bear their troubles more easily, and which makes their domestic relations so infinitely more happy : the wife and children obedient, cleanly, and industrious, and the husband thoughtful and tolerant. Then the new comer will apply to some of the native teachers, who will instruct him as far as they are capable ; and, at last, if he behaves well, he is admitted to one of the classes taught and looked after by either Herr Marensky or his assistant, Mr. Watson. If, at the end of five years, the man or woman, as the case may be, appears to thoroughly understand the ceremony, and be fit to benefit by it, he is at last baptized. If not, he enters into the body of catechumens, who are allowed to be present in the church during the first part of the service, while the communion-table is hid from their gaze by curtains, but are sent out before the curtains are drawn aside for the commandments to be read from the table. He remains a catechumen until such a time as Herr Marensky is convinced that he is worthy of baptism—sometimes as long a time as fifteen years ; and any misdeed during this time puts it off indefinitely.

The above are, as nearly as possible, the identical words of Herr Marensky in answer to my questions as to the means of conversion used. No man is ever under any circumstances solicited to embrace

Christianity, and if he conforms to the laws of the society he might live and die in whatever belief he may happen to hold. Herr Marensky has nothing at all to do directly with the interior economy of the settlement, which is left entirely to the management of four chiefs, one of whom is a cousin of Secocoeni, and takes precedence of the other three. These chiefs apportion to each man as much, or as little, land as he can till to advantage, and settle what rent he shall pay for it ; they settle all their disputes, and investigate any cases of crime or drunkenness that may occur. If any unusual difficulty arise, they at once refer it to Herr Marensky ; and also render him an account, at stated intervals, of their proceedings. His consent has to be given before any man can either be flogged or expelled. He is always ready to see and advise any of his people in any of their difficulties, and is always on the spot to give them consolation in any misfortunes that may come upon them.

It must not be supposed that it was all fair sailing for the little settlement, when they had once taken up their quarters at Potsabelo. From the very first they met with a most bitter opposition from the Boers, and were also liable to frequent raids upon them by native tribes. Their very first task was to build a laager, or fort, large enough to hold the entire population and their stock ; and on several occasions they defended it against large odds, under Herr Marensky.

The fort is situated upon the summit of a high knoll, and with steep ascent to it on all sides. Walls,

fifteen feet high and two feet thick, pierced with loop-holes, and built of ironstone, enclose a space of seventy yards square ; there are flank defences, and a turret over the entrance, which gives a clear look-out over to the surrounding country. Their first collision with the Boers was caused by almost the same incident which drove them from the territory of Secocoeni. A Kaffir who had been desperately ill-treated by his Boer master, escaped, and fled for protection to Herr Marensky. On careful inquiry it turned out that there was absolutely no agreement of any description between the boy and his master, and that he had only been kept by force for many months past. Herr Marensky refused to acknowledge any such legal slavery, as giving up the boy would imply, and told the Boers who came to demand his extradition, that they would have to take him by force if they took him at all. The Boers retired to talk it over, and presently returned in still larger numbers, bent on mischief ; but the missionary had meanwhile called out all his forces, and showed such a strong front, that the Dutchmen very soon gave it up as a bad job, and retreated, vowing vengeance. However, as they respected his strength and evident determination of holding his own, they never more openly molested him.

Only four years ago, while in the middle of the Sunday morning service, the men in charge of the flocks burst in with the intelligence that a large impey (army) had suddenly come upon them, and driven away the whole herds. The pastor, after one very short prayer (*"Nach einem sehr Kurzen Gebet"*)

for success, dismissed his congregation, with orders to instantly fetch their arms; and in a very few minutes, himself at their head, they were on the trail of their flocks. Just before dusk they came up with the enemy, who had been impeded by having to drive the stock, and were completely successful in the engagement which ensued, inflicting heavy loss on the invaders, and rescuing all but a few of the oxen which had lagged behind and had been assagaied out of the wanton love of slaughter which characterizes a Kaffir when on the war-path.

Not long after this, one of the head men, coming up in the evening to consult with his pastor on some domestic difficulty, detected a strange Kaffir with a gun in his hands creeping in the shadow of the trees, towards the open window at which Herr Marensky sat writing. Stealthily crawling along behind him, he was just in time to knock the gun out of his hands, as the murderous wretch pulled the trigger, and the charge lodged harmless in the window-sill. The would-be assassin, greased all over, and slippery as an eel, wriggled himself free from his captor, who was at the time weak and ill, and made good his escape before Herr Marensky could render any assistance in detaining him; and, assisted by the darkness, managed to get clear away from the enraged natives, who were after him instantly to avenge the murderous attack on their pastor.

Throughout South Africa there are fifty-six missionaries and thirty-four stations belonging to the Berlin Society; and although it may be a doubtful point whether the work carried on by missionaries

in the aggregate is beneficial or the reverse to the interests of the country and the morals of the natives as a whole, yet there cannot be two opinions about the improvement in the condition both mentally and physically of those who are under the care of this particular society, which again almost entirely owes its success to the common sense and practical principles which Herr Marensky himself carries out and lays down for the guidance of the other missionaries of the Society. The pay of these men, who carry their lives in their hands from day to day, amidst hardships, ill-treatment, suspicion, and disappointments almost incredible, is miserably inadequate, not only to their wants, but to their absolute necessities. An unmarried man receives 80*l.* per annum, and a married 100*l.*, and also draws 3*l.* per annum for each child under three years old, 6*l.* for one over, and 12*l.* a child when education becomes necessary. It is almost imperative, however, for a missionary to be married, or otherwise he is completely looked down upon by all Kaffirs who have wives, and who do not consider a man of any importance unless married, and in fact have no hesitation in calling them "worthless boys." When Captain Clarke, as her Majesty's Commissioner, first sent to Secocoeni, that mighty chief replied "that Captain Clarke was only an unmarried boy, and what could such a worthless fellow have to do with him." Herr Marensky was himself unmarried for three years, and only obtained a degree of respect by the intimation that he was just on the point of being married, and would soon bring his wife to show them that he was.

The most difficult question a mission has to

deal with is the treatment of Kaffirs who wish to be baptized, but have more than one wife. Personally Herr Marensky would not make it a *sine quâ non* that the man should put away all over the number of one, but the Kaffirs themselves insisted on it, because they could not understand anything but one fixed hard and fast line, and could see no reason at all why, if a man was baptized who had several wives, a baptized man should not marry several. This feeling on their part induced Herr Marensky to decree that when a man with several wives wished to be baptized he should choose the wife he was most loth to part with, irrespective of whether she was his first married or last married, and keep her as his only one. It is not such a hard case for the discarded widows as it at first sight appears to one who is ignorant of the Kaffir marriage customs. The husband regards his wife in an utterly different capacity to that which a wife is supposed to fill among the whites. With the Kaffir she is merely a servant who will work for and support him, and whom he can do as he likes with, not running any risk of her either leaving him or making reprisals for harsh treatment. The women being looked upon in this light, become of marketable value to their parents; and when a man wishes to marry one, there is no pretence of love-making, etc., but he goes straight to the father, having first obtained his chief's leave to marry, and asks him how many oxen he will take for his daughter. After some haggling a price is fixed upon, and the husband drives up the cattle, and after various ceremonies and much feasting, takes away his wife. He then gives her a krall and a certain portion of land, which

it is her business to till, and from it to supply provisions for her lord and master. The husband has his separate krall, and each wife in turn has to bring him his day's food to the place where he sleeps. This is roughly the state of affairs, and it follows that the deserted wives return at once to their people, who are only too glad to have them, as the oxen once paid are not redemanded, and the parents are able to sell the women again, occasionally at an enhanced price if the wife has proved herself a good workwoman and has made her former lord comfortable.

As the husband who wishes to be baptized has naturally not countenanced the visits and machinations of the witch-doctor, or allowed his wives to participate in the various dancing and devilry ceremonies which the missionaries forbid, and which have special attraction for the women, he is voted a stupid, slow fellow, and the wives themselves are delighted to leave him and have the chance of again being married to another man who will not put himself in opposition to their amusement.

Missionaries in general, are more opposed on account of the stores, they often have attached to their station, than on any other ground ; and, in fact, nearly all the objections to their operations may be traced to this source. I was anxious to hear what Herr Marensky had to say in favour of the practice, which it was evident he approved of by the large store at his own station.

"Can you tell me any reason why a mission station should not have a store?" said he.

I could only give the usual well-worn arguments,

although I did not myself see much point in them, that the callings of a missionary and a store-keeper were too utterly distinct to ever be blended together without the duties of the missionary being neglected; that it put great temptations in the missionary's way; and that the permission was more often abused than benefited by.

Herr Marensky asked me if I had ever heard any one missionary, either of his own or any other Society, particularized, as abusing his privilege, or using it for his advantage instead of the natives', and I was obliged to own that I had not.

He proceeded. "You and all others who have travelled, even through the more civilized parts of the country, must be aware that it is absolutely necessary for a traveller or hunter to trade to obtain any of their ordinary produce from either Dutch or Kaffir, and that money will not buy what a tenth part of its value in merchandise will easily bring in. Why, then, should the missionary be the only one who may not avail himself and his people of this convenience? Again, if the natives of the station have no store of their own to deal with, they will go to the nearest and there run into debt, which ought at all times to be prevented; they will also be in the way of obtaining spirits, which they can never do at the mission store. There are only two stores in all kept by the Berlin Society, and all the profits, if there be any, are employed exclusively in building new mills or workshops. The very houses the missionaries build for themselves are not their own property, but the Society's, and belong of

right to the next man who is appointed to the station.

Herr Pastor Marensky himself appears to be about forty-five years of age, of a medium height, but powerfully built. He wears a beard, which, with his hair, is iron grey in colour. His most striking feature is a fine broad forehead, and very quick bright eyes give him a peculiarly vivacious, humorous expression, and it needs but one glance to read the energy and determination in his character, which have carried him through a life of such varied dangers and difficulties. He is one of the most pleasant and amusing companions I have ever come across.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Kaffir Service—The Native Kralls—A Funeral—Extracting a Tooth—Making Beltong—The Foreloupers desert—Bôk-hunting—Bronswick Salt—A Farewell Supper—Parting Presents—A Breakdown.

DURING the evening the boy whom Herr Marensky had sent for made his appearance, but he could not be induced to accompany us when he heard our destination, as he feared that the hostile natives would make a raid down there as soon as they heard that a party of hunters, who would be sure to have arms and ammunition, of which they were much in need, had arrived on the spot.

On Sunday morning we had breakfast at half-past seven, and then the bell began to toll for the native service. The church is within a few paces of the pastor's dwelling-house. The foundation-work is white stone and the walls of red brick, and it has a thatched roof. It has a pretty little steeple of galvanized iron, which in the sunlight shines like burnished silver. The building is in the form of a cross, and capable of holding 1000 people.

The service commenced at nine o'clock, and by that time some 800 were collected in the church; the men on one side and the women on the other: the catechumens seated nearest to the door. There are no seats, except two pews for visitors and the

Europeans of the station ; so nearly all the Kaffirs bring their stools with them, but some prefer squatting on the ground. All who come to church have to be decently clothed. The younger portion of the small congregation were particularly smart and gaudy, but none of the girls wore anything more gay than plain cotton dresses. Many of the old men and women contented themselves with a blanket closely wrapped round them. One group, in particular, attracted my attention among the males. A young fellow, with a long blue shirt reaching to his knees, and above it a rather well-cut Eton jacket, sat next to a very old fellow with snow-white wool, who considered himself sufficiently got up in a blanket of many colours ; and next him a fine, tall, well-built man, clad in what had evidently been at one time an embroidered lady's night-shirt, and under it a pair of well-worn tweed knickerbockers, was taking charge of some blind aged relation, and looking after his comfort most energetically by poking any boy in the ribs who seemed to be pressing him in too close.

The singing was perhaps the most astonishing part of the whole service, and would have done credit to any ordinary church choir in England. The Kaffirs take to part singing very quickly and Mr. Watson, the under-missionary, an enthusiastic musician, spends all his leisure in teaching the large choir he has been able to select from among the boys and women, which accounts for their wonderful proficiency. When Sir Theophilus Shepstone visited the station, the school children greeted him by singing "God save the Queen" in English.

In the afternoon there was a German service for those of the neighbourhood who cared to come, but in all the congregation only numbered twelve, including children. Afterwards Herr Marensky took me for a walk through the settlement, and we paid visits to many of the kralls, all of which were in the highest possible degree of cleanliness and order. Every krall had its store of mealie cobs hanging outside to dry, and many had large pockets of Kaffir corn as well. A funeral took place in the evening, and the whole population followed the coffin to the God's acre, just outside the boundaries. The singing was very touching and sweet, and no one could again call Kaffir an ugly language after hearing the hymns sung over the grave. When the service was concluded, the men all stayed behind gathering stones, with which they filled the poor fellow's grave, to prevent the jackals and hyenas unearthing the coffin.

During the day the newspapers by the post-cart arrived, and in them was an account of the attempted assassination of the Kaiser. The indignation and horror expressed by all sufficiently showed that distance had not dimmed their loyalty for "Vaterland." In the evening the ladies gave us some music selected from Moody and Sankey's hymns, and several national airs, before the whole family retired to rest at ten o'clock.

Next morning, after breakfast, I was obliged to leave, although I should have much liked to make a longer stay. While I was saying good-bye to Herr Marensky, a Kaffir came to the study, and made

some complaint to him, the nature of which I did not understand till I saw him open his mouth wide, and then squat down on the ground outside. Herr Marensky took down a case of instruments, selected one, and for a second leant over the man; but before I had time to see the operation he had extracted a huge black, three-fanged tooth in the most masterly style, and without even removing the large pipe from his lips. The wretched Kaffir never moved a muscle of his countenance, or uttered a groan, but for a long time sat disconsolately in the same spot, spitting out the blood which, however, he carefully covered over with sand before he went away. Herr Marensky is as good a doctor, and perhaps the best surgeon, to be found in the Transvaal, with the exception of those at present with the troops, and who are called in whenever their assistance is procurable.

As a parting present Herr Marensky gave me various photographs of his station and family, all of whom came out to wish me God-speed on my journey as I rode away.

I stayed the night in Middelburg with Captain Persse, and slept in his tent on an impromptu bed of tanned skins which Captain Carrington was taking up with him to Fort Weeber, to make into ammunition-pouches for the volunteers. It was a bitterly cold night, and in the morning all the water was frozen over, but I managed to keep pretty warm. My host rode back to the waggons with me next morning, but we were not successful in coming across any bôk.

Next day we killed several blesse- and spring-bôk, so we spent Thursday in making a large supply of beltong from their flesh.

The process is very simple. Strips of flesh, the thickness of a man's wrist, are cut out of the animal, rubbed with salt, and then all put together into a fresh skin to "sweat" for several hours. The strips are then hung up in the sun till dried quite hard, which it only takes about twenty-four hours of the fierce African sun to effect.

We had intended making a start for Leydenburg the following day, but Jantze awoke me with the news that Wildebeeste, our foreloupper, and the foreloupper of the other waggon, had bolted during the night. The only reason they had given the other boys who remained for being discontented was that the meal we had last given them was "too coarse." The drivers, of course, were aware of their intention to leave, but to us professed to feel as much astonishment and anger as we did. We were now left with only the two drivers, and Francis our cook, to manage the two spans of oxen the two waggons and all the horses, so we had to turn to ourselves with a will, to get things done properly. I at once sent off a letter to Herr Marensky, asking him to send me out a couple of boys who would act as foreloupers, and leaving the amount of wages to be settled by him, so as not to let this interfere with my obtaining the boys.

While we were breakfasting on Saturday morning, we saw a long black line of bôks descending the hills at our back, and making for the water. For a long

time we watched, and at least *two miles* of them had descended before A. and I started with our rifles to cut them off.

We came upon them unawares, and had a capital opportunity for a steady shot, of which we availed ourselves, and knocked over a couple; and then started off after the startled herd, who scattered in all directions. A. and I were soon separated, as he followed a fine old ram which he had wounded, and I, having an eye to the pot, singled out a fat young doe to follow up, and a very long chase she led me in the rear of a herd of some hundred others before I even got a shot at her, which from the excitement and heat of a long ride I missed. The lot now took up the hill, and I had to get off and rest my horse by walking him up; when I got near the top I left the horse and crawled up to reconnoitre, and much to my satisfaction saw the herd, with my young bôk standing nearest of all to me, only a couple of hundred yards away, exhausted after their long run, and waiting for me to appear before starting off again.

I waited a minute or two, lying flat on my back, so as to recover my steadiness, for my hand was shaking too much from the violent exercise of walking up the steep hill, to take a certain shot; then changing position, I sat down with an elbow on each knee, and got a fine bead on the shoulder of my especial fancy, fired, and when the smoke cleared away, had the pleasure of seeing it lying motionless on the same spot, and with a bullet clean through its shoulders.

After I had cleaned the carcase, and cut off from it the head, neck, and other parts not fit for food, I had a great deal of difficulty in getting it upon my horse's back. The horse did not object to coming close up to it, but just as I was lifting it on to the saddle, off he would start, not liking the look, and the bôk would slip down on to the ground ; but I at last circumvented him by putting my shirt over his head, as I had nothing else to blindfold him with, while I made the bôk all secure to the saddle. Many of the horses never get over their dislike to the smell of blood ; but this one from the first rather liked it than otherwise, for I came upon him one day licking the bleeding carcase of a newly-skinned bôk which was hanging up to the waggon. Possibly this was only to obtain the slight salt taste contained in blood.

Salt seems to be absolutely necessary to all animals at times, and when the natural salt-pans fail in their supply, all the herds of bôk are attacked with a kind of mange called bronsick. Horses and oxen are subject to the same complaint if they are not supplied with an occasional supply of salt. I have often seen both horses and oxen licking each others' skins to extract the salt from them, and the oxen constantly lick the rims and trek-tow, which is saturated with their salt sweat. When there is no grass at all for the oxen, they will keep alive for days if there is plenty of water, provided that they are supplied with a handful of salt apiece during the night.

The next Sunday arrived with no answer from

Herr Marensky in reply to my letter, asking him to send us our boys. But irrespective of whether they came or not, we had decided to make a start the following morning, as we had now only seven days left in which to reach Leydenburg, a full 100 miles' distance. It was not for months afterwards that I received Herr Marensky's letter, which had miscarried.

As his station was suffering from an epidemic, he feared sending me any of his boys as servants, but added, "I should have much liked to assist you in obtaining trustworthy boys, for it is a great pity that strangers always get the worst in the colony. Your own boys left you, I am led to understand, because they feared the dangers of fighting to which they might be exposed with you."

Mr. Hartogh had for the last few days been a little reserved about something or another, but had only expressed it by not coming near us; so we asked him straight out if we had done anything to annoy him in any way, and expressed our sorrow if we had. At first he would say nothing but that we were Englishmen, and that he knew his house was not what we were accustomed to; but before long it came out that our only offence was that we had not made more use of his house, or asked him for enough supplies from it. Our explanation that it was so utterly opposed to all our ideas for such perfect strangers as we were to quarter ourselves without any invitation upon him, and that we were already almost ashamed for having received so many presents and so much kindness, and having

CHAPTER XX.

Water scarce—Ammunition runs short—Laziness—"One over"—
No Market—Our Roads divide—Stalking a Donkey—Oxen
begin to fail—A bad Stick—Ugly Country—A Boer's Farm—
Obtain a Guide.

NEXT morning, Tuesday, 25th, after we had treked about half a mile, we came to a patch of fairly good grass, which had escaped the general burning, so we at once outspanned to give the oxen a feed ; but we had to go without our own breakfast in consequence, for there was no water to make our coffee, and if there had been, there was no mess about to make a fire to boil it at, or cook our meat ; so we had to content ourselves with bread and butter, and were thankful enough to have such an unusual luxury to indulge in.

We treked off again at twelve o'clock, although the sun was beating down fiercely, and made it very trying work for the oxen ; but water was necessary, and we had unwillingly to give them the extra labour. I had a long ride after a blesse-bôk in the afternoon. With my first shot I had wounded it slightly, and as my horse was fresh I soon rode into it ; but on putting my hand into my pouch for a cartridge, I found it was empty. I then rode right alongside, but my horse took fright and sheered off each time I attempted to hit the bôk's head with the butt end of

my carbine. At last the bôk laid down, and I got off to try and compass its death with carbine and knife combined ; but the instant I dismounted, the bôk rose up and limped slowly, but still faster than I could keep up with on foot. A dozen times I attempted to hit it from the saddle, but with no success, and a dozen times the bôk laid down and got up again before I was near enough to touch it on foot. There was not a stone far or near ; and at last, much disgusted at my carelessness in leaving the waggon with an empty pouch, I had to leave the bôk, for darkness was coming on. I sincerely hope the poor beast recovered from his wound, but most probably the vultures benefited by my loss. Every night the cold grew more intense, and we congratulated ourselves on having brought our ulsters with us, in addition to a plentiful supply of blankets. Of a morning every liquid, from water to oil, is frozen, even inside the waggon, and the edges of the blankets which covered our mouths were stiff from the frozen moisture of our breaths upon them. The sun, during the day, made it just as hot as it was cold at night, and the thermometer inside the waggon registered on an average 90° ; but there was usually a fresh breeze, which made the heat not only easily endurable but very pleasant. Both cold and heat are of such a *dry* character, that even a delicate invalid is not injured by the sudden changes, provided he takes ordinary precautions, such as changing into very warm clothes as the sun goes down, and always wearing flannel to prevent any chance of a sudden chill. The aspect of the country we were now travelling through was dark, dreary, and desolate beyond descrip-

tion. All the grass had been very recently burnt off, and for miles and miles our road lay through black and dusty downs, with not a vestige of habitation or vegetation, as far as the eye could reach. The occasional herds of bôk which appeared on the rises, and then started off as we approached, lent a certain amount of excitement to what would have been otherwise an almost too desperately monotonous and depressing journey at this time of the year. While the present system of yearly burning off all the grass of the country is pursued, there can never be any stock of feathered game, for nine out of ten of the birds must be destroyed in such enormously extensive fires.

Our fourth day's trek seemed to take us out of the game district, for we only came across three or four very small herds of blesse-bôk during the whole day's trekking. A very strong hot wind blew all day in our faces, and bore along such clouds of sand that we felt disinclined to leave the waggon, as our eyes were too full of dust to see the sights of our rifles, even if we had been able to get within shot of any game.

It is a terrible country for extracting all the energy out of a man's composition. One old farmer was most candid in his confession of laziness and want of energy. He was discussing the chance of ostrich-breeding on his farm, and expressed his desire to have a few, but for his dread of their increasing rapidly, as he would have so much additional labour in superintending their culture, although he was quite aware of how paying a specula-

tion it was. He proceeded: "I always plan out the work for the day, and apportion it so that *one pair of hands* may be left over, and that pair be *my own*; and then, if anything pressing turns up suddenly, I can make one man leave his plough, or whatever he may be at, to attend to it, so that there may still be the *one over*. I do not use horse ploughs, for that entails a white man's employment, and I should so often not have one, and then should be obliged to turn to myself. I never want too plentiful crops either, for that entails an unprovided-for supply of labour to bring them in; and in that case again there would not be able to be *one over*." We suggested that this was an unheard-of condition of mind in an English farmer, but our friend replied, "Och, yes; but let your most industrious English farmer come out here, and in a year he will be of just the same mind as I am; for what is the use of having more than one can make use of?" To an Englishman this seems an almost incredible feeling for any man to have; but, besides the effect of a hot climate in causing a general listlessness, there is a slight amount of truth in the old man's assertion that there is no use in having more than a certain quantity of produce, for there is absolutely nothing for the farmer to spend his money on, when he has once got his house, garden, and stock to the degree which seems perfect enough to him; he then finds that a minimum amount of his own labour will keep all these up, and deems all else but comfortable subsistence superfluous.

At present the outside colonists of the Transvaal

are not sufficiently *educated in comfort* to even know how many wants they really have, and to recognize the deficiencies in their scale of comfort; and the only means of improving their education is by lessening the difficulties of transport. The country is now quite stagnant, and so it must remain until the bullock-waggon has ceased to be the only means of conveying produce to a market, and for bringing into the country the comforts and refinements of the towns.

During the morning trek, as our oxen walked faster than those in P.'s waggon, we were some distance ahead when we came to a place where the track branched off into two other smaller ones, to the right and the left, both appearing to be equally used—or more correctly not used—for there was no fresh spoor on either; but as the left-hand road appeared to lead straight in the direction of Leydenburg, we turned the oxen on to that. We had to trek a long distance before there was water, where we outspanned; and not long after, P. rode up to tell us that, acting on his driver's information, he had taken his waggon on the other road, being the better of the two. As the roads met further on, we decided each to continue on his own road, rather than have the delay of one waggon retracing its way to join the other.

As we had seen a few spring-bòk on our way along, I walked out with my rifle, for the ground was too thickly covered with rocks and stones for a horse to be of any use. I saw no bòk about, and was just returning to the waggon, when I spied the

back of some large grey animal a short distance off, moving slowly along behind a ledge of rock. I made a long détour to have the wind in my face, and then proceeded very cautiously to stalk whatever new kind of bôk it might be. While after this new bôk, I came upon the spring-bôk I had originally set out after ; but although I was within a very few yards of them I would not fire, and so disturb the strange bôk I was stalking, and which I had now made sure of, as I was hidden from it by a large rock, which would enable me to get as close to it as I chose. At last I reached the very rock it was behind, and, putting my sight down altogether, so as to shoot point blank, I turned the corner ; but what was my extreme disgust to find out that the strange bôk was nothing more than a grey donkey ! While I was recovering from my chagrin, the ass's owner made his appearance. He was a Kaffir, armed with a rifle ; and, although he could speak no English, I made out that he was after the bôk which I had come upon ; but that seeing me coming, and trusting more to my aim than his own, and also not liking to shoot when a white man was there, he had waited patiently and kept out of sight. I could not, even if I had wanted to, have explained the reason of my not firing at the spring-bôk, which was a matter of much astonishment to the Kaffir. He followed me to the waggon, and there Jantze elicited from him that our road was as good, or better, than that which P.'s waggon had taken, and that one trek would take us to his "boss's" farm, where we could very likely procure another boy as forelouper.

I gave him a "pooza" of spirits, and he then departed, riding his donkey, which could not have weighed more than his master, to watch for the bôk, and poach one when they were lying down in the dusk of the evening, and he could get up close to them, concealed by the rising mists.

A Kaffir is a splendid stalker, and will crawl and wriggle a mile along ground where, to all appearances, there is not enough grass cover to hide a snake. He never fires at a bôk unless within a hundred yards of it, but generally manages to be within ten before he pulls the trigger. The Kaffirs who have associated with whites seem to lose much of their natural hunting craft. Our own boys, although very keen indeed, had no idea of stalking, and acted on the belief, most fallaciously attributed to the ostrich, that if they could not see the object they are stalking, it follows that the animals could not see them.

While having dinner, I shot a couple of partridges which came up to within a few yards of the waggon, as if to see what we were doing. They were almost exactly like the English birds, and the male bird only differed in having no horse-shoe marked on his breast. No bird, animal, or insect in South Africa is exactly like its European kindred, although many bear a close resemblance. The snipe, at first sight exactly alike, has a totally different flight, and a few darker feathers about the neck; the rabbit has thinner legs and larger ears; and the butterflies, with the exception of the painted lady, are all different, although occasionally closely allied.

The oxen were nearly worn out by their long

morning trek, so we did not start till the sun was setting, and very soon had to outspan ; as, after crossing a broad slood, we found ourselves wandering in tall tambootie grass, and were not able to find any trace of the path. The cold was so intense that, without troubling to light a fire and cooking anything, I ate a few biscuits, and then turned in under my sheep-skin karosse, as the only place where I had a chance of keeping warm. I was out at daybreak, and made a tour round to discover the path again, but found that we had left it the other side of the slood, and had followed a game track instead from the point where we crossed over. We had some difficulty in turning the waggon round again, as the ground was very boggy ; and when we at last succeeded, it was only to stick fast in the bank the other side of the slood. First we tried digging away a passage for the wheels, but finding that the oxen were still unable to pull it out, we were forced to unload the hind part of the waggon, which delayed us for more than six hours. As the track we had come down from the road was very precipitous, I got on my horse Cricket to explore the ground, and, if possible, find a way to join the right road again, without reascending the hill.

There appeared to be an open track over some dark-coloured ground, which, to my eyes, looked as firm and as hard as rock. My horse manifested a good deal of reluctance to go on it ; but, in spite of a previous experience of the non-advisability of doing so, I forced him on with spurs and whip, and was punished in consequence ; for, after a few yards, the treacherous top layer of bad soil gave way, and down

sank the horse right over his girths, into soft, clinging, consistent mud. In springing from its back, I gave my thigh a wrench, and for some moments was unable to move; but it was only benumbed, and I was soon able, with Jantze's assistance, to help poor Cricket to extricate himself, but by which we were delayed for another hour; and, after all, had to keep to our original road and ascend the hill.

My horse was never quite the same after this accident, and seemed to have lost all his affection for me; I had the first sign of it only a few hours later. A fine orebie crossed the road in front of me; I took a running shot and broke its fore leg; but it still went on as if unhurt. I watched it until it lay down some distance away, and then started off on Cricket; when within easy range, I sprang off and threw the reins on the ground as usual; but the instant I turned my back to fire, instead of my horse standing as it had done hundreds of times before, off it started at full speed, and galloped to the top of a hill some distance off. The waggon was close by, so it did not much matter in this instance, as I sent Jantze after the horse, while Francis and I dragged up the bök, which was dead.

I petted Cricket, always fed him out of my own hand, and made much of him for weeks afterwards, but was never able again to repose any confidence in him; and unless within reach of the waggon on foot, never dared to fire without either passing the rein under my arm or tying him to a tree, both of which are at times most inconvenient

necessities. It is of vital importance to a hunter that he should be able to place the most perfect confidence in his horse, as he may often have to trust to its speed when his own eye or rifle have played him false.

For our next trek we had the ascent of a very long weary hill, and so weak and tired were the oxen, that I feared they would break down before reaching the summit ; but the plucky little fellows toiled steadily on, and when at last on level ground seemed to pick up their strength, and treked along quite merrily. Our road lay along the very top of the hill, upon a narrow plateau not more than fifty yards wide, with an almost perpendicular descent for many hundred feet on either side. As far as we could see for miles and miles were high peaks covered with huge rocks, and broken up by deep, dark ravines. The stream we crossed in the morning wound in and out far down below us like a silver snake. A few stunted shrubs and the shrivelled-up grass were the only signs of vegetation. It was far the finest view I had seen in Africa, and for wild savage beauty could not be surpassed. But, nevertheless, it was an uncanny looking country and neither good for man nor beast. As I looked down on it a sense of desolation and loneliness stole over me, which Jantze gave exact expression to in his broken English, after gazing for some time with rather an uneasy look on his face : " Ah, bah ! no good that place ; plenty much holes ; track quick ; get away from here."

At the end of this plateau the Boer's house we were seeking came in sight, situated far down below,

then starting early by daylight, push right through the country, where there might be a stray lot of Kaffirs on the look-out for plunder. I should have taken his advice, but I knew that the oxen were too weak to endure such a long day's work as his plan would have given them. I bid the Dutchman farewell ; and then, under the guidance of Seul, as our new boy was called, set off a couple of hours' treking before sunset ; and the oxen, refreshed by their unaccustomed good feed, went along merrily.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Dismal Valley—A Mud-hole—Rigging out—A Night Trek—
Ware Kaffirs—The Dusselboom breaks—A Compulsory Halt
—Leydenburg—Waggon-makers—High Prices—Speculators.

SOME three miles from the Boer's farm we entered into the most hideous place I have ever been in. It was a valley with high hills on each side, and so narrow that when once in there seemed no exit at either end; but the grass had lately been burnt, and looked as if a dismal black pall had been stretched from the summit of the hills to the bottom of the valley. I was very anxious to get out of it before we outspanned, but before we reached the end I was obliged to, as darkness came on, and there were bad mud-holes in our road. The shadows on the hills gave the place a still more unearthly and ghostly appearance, and the boys were frightened out of their lives. Seul declared he would go back, but I gave him a large "pooza" of raw spirit, which inclined him to roll up in his blankets and go to sleep instead. To make things worse, a biting, howling wind came sweeping the valley from end to end. Although it was only six, I turned into bed; and even inside the waggon, with all the blankets and skins I had on the top of me, the cold pierced through, so I expect the boys must have been half frozen before morning.

At the first streak of daylight, the boys, without being told, fetched up the oxen, and we were on the trek before I felt inclined to turn out and face the raw morning air. During the night I had heard someone moving about the back of the waggon, and on inquiring about it, I was told that the wind was so violent that Francis, who was the most unmitigated coward, fearing it would roll the waggon away, had got up and put on the break. His alarm must have been genuine, or he would never have left his warm blankets unless fear of being run over impelled him to.

We crossed the stream without any accident, although it looked just the place for a bad "stick," and were just commencing the ascent of a long hill at the end of the valley, when down went the front wheels, through a crust of hard earth, over the axles into deep black clay. First of all we tried to force the oxen to draw it through, but with no better result than the breaking half-a-dozen yoke-keys and one yoke, in frantic efforts to avoid the cutting strokes the boys showered down on their backs, and at last, fairly tired out, they sulkily refused to pull. Seeing that it was worse than useless expecting the oxen to extricate the waggon as it was, we outshamed them and set to work with the spades. After a couple of hours' hard work a trench was dug from each fore-wheel to the other side of the mud-hole. The oxen were inspanned again, and with their first pull brought the front wheels clear, but to no purpose; for the hind wheels, over which the heaviest weight had shifted, broke through another crust of earth and stuck fast in a worse position than we were in before.

Flogging the tired and now dispirited oxen was mere cruelty, so they were again outspanned. It was evident that the waggon was too heavy to get through with any amount of digging, so reluctantly I had to set the boys at work to unload everything, while I employed myself cutting the long tough tambootie grass to lay on the mud and make it more consistent. In the middle of our toil I was delighted to see A. riding up to us. He had left P. in even a worse plight than ourselves. His waggon had stuck in a mud-hole similar to the one we were in, but all the spokes of one of the wheels had been broken against a large stone, in trying to pull through. This necessitated his taking off the wheel and having it mended before he could get along any farther, and as the nearest wheelwright was at Leydenburg, twenty miles away, it would take at least a week to put him on the road again.

To unload the waggon took another two hours, but the labour was not grudged when we saw the waggon safe and sound on the firm land the other side. We packed in the stores again anyhow, so as to get in one good trek at all events before sundown. Seul insisted upon our outspanning for the night in an open place, to enable us to keep a good look-out. He advised us to do without fires, and was so very urgent about it that we had to give up our hot coffee and turn in without anything better to eat than dry biscuits.

We tied the oxen up doubly secure to the duselboom, and also put a chain through each of their neck-straps, to prevent the possibility of the

fastenings being cut without awakening us. Seul had his own rifle, and each of the boys had one out of the waggon, ready loaded, so that if molested we should not be found unprepared.

The night passed without any adventure, but it was with a feeling of relief we saw the sun rise once more, and then all the precautions of the night before seemed absurd.

As it was Sunday we determined to observe our general rule, and spend the day where we were outspanned ; but in the afternoon Seul, who had been out with his rifle after some rhy-bôk which appeared on the top of a hill opposite, came back to the camp with the information that there were a lot of Macatees on the other side of the hills. Although they might not have any hostile intention towards us, and possibly did not even know of our vicinity, yet we judged it best to inspan and get out of the way as soon as possible.

Darkness came over very soon after we had started, but the stars gave us enough light to trek by. Our road lay between two high hills, precipitous enough to be called cliffs, and ran in and out between mighty boulders of craggy rock, which at a distance entirely hid the road up. It was the very place Kaffirs would choose for an attack, and while going through we kept our rifles all ready for use. We several times crossed and re-crossed a stream which ran through the valley, with no accident. At last we came to the end, and here the road crossed the river in a broader and deeper place than we liked the looks of at

night ; but there was no help for it, and in we splashed, with the oxen pulling up the opposite bank. In the very centre, there was a sudden sharp jolt, and a stop, then another jerk and a crash. To our intense disgust the waggon stood still, and the oxen went on with the dusselboom trailing behind them, which had broken off sharp, right at the locks. Here was a chance for the Kaffirs, if there were any about ; stuck fast, with the water up to the boards of the waggon, we were quite helpless. Luckily there were none about, as otherwise we should have fallen an easy prey. We had to light all the lanterns and candles we possessed, so as to see what we were about in tying on the dusselboom. We were in a brilliant light ourselves, and yet unable to see more than ten yards beyond the waggon, and could have been picked off one after the other by a single man with a rifle.

Our new boy, Seul proved himself invaluable, and seemed to work as well under the water as above it, not a bit minding the cold, for it was now freezing hard and a bitter wind was blowing. After two hours' work the dusselboom was in a manner spliced up again by means of numberless rims tied to all parts of it ; of course the whole strain of the heavy waggon now fell on the joining.

It was an anxious moment when the oxen first started off again ; but after one or two creaks and tugs the rims held firm, and we were soon out and on the other bank. Oxen and boys were tired out, for we had now been inspanned for eight hours, but

Seul would not hear of outspanning, although the road was full of mud-holes, and we could hardly see a yard before us. At last a compulsory halt was made; for happening to diverge a little from the narrow trek, down went the front wheel into a deep mud-drain running alongside the road, and sank until the floor of the waggon prevented it sinking any deeper into the slime. The wheels on the other side were clear off the ground, and the waggon was only held from falling on its side by the mud and reeds against it. It was far too dark to attempt getting out of the mess, so we outspanned the oxen and made up our beds as best we could on the damp, marshy ground, which did not keep us from going to sleep directly we were underneath the blankets.

Next morning Seul informed us we were within twelve miles of Leydenburg, but as a glance showed us that it would be hopeless to attempt pulling the waggon straight again without unloading, it was doubtful if we should be there before night. However, we set to work with a will, and were once more under weigh by noon. We outspanned on the way for dinner, and arrived in Leydenburg true to our appointment on July 1st, just as the darkness was closing over the little town, so we were prevented from seeing more than the outlines of the houses in the main street.

A. had ridden on some hours before, to find out a place for the waggon to outspan, and get what letters there might be waiting for us, and also to see if Mr. White was ready. He met the waggon outside the town, and showed us the way to an

empty space opposite the store of Messrs. Henwood and Rosaveare, whose manager, a friend of Mr. White's, received us very kindly, and invited us to supper at his house just as we were, in our boots and breeches, no coats, unwashed and uncombed. Here we found a letter from our future companion himself, informing us that he would be delayed several days; but as our waggon wanted very extensive repairs, we were only too glad that he was not ready and waiting for an immediate start.

The first move next day was to get the waggon unloaded, and up to the waggon-maker's yard. We put all the stores, rifles, &c., under a small square tent lent us for the occasion, and on the top of all I made up my bed; for although the manager pressed A. and myself to sleep in his house, I did not care about leaving all our valuables in the charge of the boys, besides running the risk of catching a severe cold when I again came back from a close room and sheets, to the waggon and its rough accommodation.

The inspection by the waggon-maker showed us that the waggon was in a far worse condition than we had expected. Besides requiring a new dusselboom, we now learned that a new axle for the front wheel was absolutely necessary, as the old one, made of wood, was split almost in two. All the tyres of the wheels needed shortening, and at least eight felloes required to be replaced. The very frame, we were assured on all sides, would have to be strengthened with bolts and plates before the waggon could be pronounced perfectly fit and safe for the rough and broken trek we were now bound on.

Having a waggon put to rights at all in a far away place like Leydenburg is no light matter. But when it is a case where time is of consequence, it becomes almost an impossibility. It needs a great deal of coaxing, in the first place, to prevail upon the wheelwright to give any promise at all as to when it shall be finished ; and when that promise is once given, the only chance of it being fulfilled is to pay a personal visit at least twelve times every day to see that your work is being attended to. On the other hand, on no provocation whatever must the man who wants his waggon quickly allow impatience to manifest itself in words, or even go too far in his expostulations at what he considers causeless delays ; or in a minute he will be told to take himself out of the yard and his waggon elsewhere, if he is not satisfied ; and satisfied he is obliged to be, as the probabilities are that there is not another man competent to do the work within fifty miles, at nearest.

The English village smith would hide his head with shame at the prices charged for any work of this kind. For instance, our new axle cost 11*l.*, and all other repairs in proportion. But it must not be supposed that the waggon-maker is the only one who expects and makes these large profits. Every single article of consumption is in the same ratio. At the time I was there Australian flour was selling at 5*l.* the 100 lbs. ; lead and sugar were both retailed at 1*s.* per lb. ; tea, of the poorest blend at 4*s.* ; a bottle of beer cost 5*s.* ; a bottle of champagne 1*l.* ; biscuits at about 3*s.* per lb. ; and squareface gin at 7*s.* 6*d.* the bottle, although it costs but 1*s.* 6*d.* on

the coast; a tin of milk was 4s., and one of jam 2s. 6d.; hams 2s. 6d. per lb., and bacon not much less. Of course there are many circumstances to be taken into account for the, at first sight, outrageous prices of goods and labour of any kind. The primary cause is naturally the high rate of transport from the coast.

At this time 50s. per 100 lbs. was gladly paid as carriage for waggons from Durban; and a few months later, on my return, double that sum would not have procured one.

Added to this high carriage is the interest on the goods for the three months that will elapse between the order being received in Durban and their delivery up-country. This is a far more serious item in South Africa than can be conceived in England. Here, to every man who has money, it is of the greatest possible importance to have it always at hand, as far more money is made by speculation in mealies, horses, waggons, meal, spirits, tobacco, or oxen, than by any legitimate trading. It would not be a rash assertion to state that not five men who have made "their pile" in South Africa have made it without some lucky hit or other. The only men who have ready money at their command, perhaps, in the Transvaal and in Natal, are those whose business it is to make contracts with the Government, and those who speculate on the rise or fall of the most important articles of trade. A fortune can very easily be made out of one good speculation in such an article as forage or grain. The lucky speculator gets an inkling that the

Government will want 100,000 bags of mealies by such a time. He knows, supposing it is harvest-time, that even in the ordinary course of events mealies will be far dearer at that season, so even if his information fails him he will still be no loser. He immediately sets to work and quietly buys up every meud of mealies he can lay his hands on all through the country. He does not remove the bags, and probably does not pay for them, at all events not more than a deposit to close the bargain. If his information is correct, in a few months Government advertises a contract for the supply of mealies. The mere fact of the want becoming known sends up the price enormously. The other speculators begin to look about for mealies before they send in their estimates, and their inquiries still drive up the price, and they find that they cannot take the contract at any price. Then the monopolist of mealies sends in his estimate. He has paid probably, on an average, from 9s. to 10s. a meud, without carriage, and he will, without doubt, be able to successfully demand from between 25s. to 40s., including carriage to wherever they must be delivered, which will still leave him, after all expenses are paid, a handsome profit of from 10s. to 1l. on every bag he sells. It would be far more, but many of his meuds will be unfit for sale either from mildew or ravages of vermin, and he himself will very probably be made to pay exorbitant charges for transporting his grain by another speculator who has obtained in much the same way the complete control for a time of all the waggons on the road.

It is also a money-making business to speculate on the fall of any article of consumption in a similar manner. The Government sends out its contract for the supply of meal at a time when meal is very high. The speculator knows that in a short time he can command a large supply at a low rate, or that the price itself will fall. It may then be worth his while to take the contract, and lose money on every bag he at first supplies, to have the same high price paid for those he will supply later on, and which have cost him very little. No article is too small to escape a clever speculator's attention. He will come to any of the up-country towns, which it takes waggons a long time to reach with supplies, and by his own observation in the large stores—of which there are not more than half-a-dozen at most—will find out the article or articles which will run short during the next six months or so. He will then unobtrusively find out what waggons are expected in, and what they are loaded with; and will thus be able to hit off one or two necessities, such as milk, beer, spirits, coffee, meal, or sugar, which will run short, and therefore which will sell at fancy prices. He gets these all ready, and at the right moment, when the town has had time to find the need of them, and the storekeepers are at their wits' end how to obtain fresh stock, two or three waggons, expected by nobody, but one or two who are in the secret, will some morning pull up in the market-square, laden with the very goods in such request, and the speculator clears his cent per cent at least. It needs a very long-headed, shrewd man, however,

to be successful ; and the few who have made money at it, and the many who have lost, bear witness that it is one thing to talk about the principles of the occupation, and quite another to carry them out successfully.

CHAPTER XXII.

Leydenburg and its Inhabitants—Ominous Tidings—Mail-cart missing—Horse-sickness—Guarantees—Salted Horses—Vets.—Diseases of Animals.

A COMPANY of the 13th were quartered at Leydenburg for the protection of the town. Both trade and society had naturally received a great stimulus from the presence of the military and the money they brought into circulation there; so it was a very favourable time for a stranger to pay it a visit. The town itself consists of a market-square and two long straggling streets running parallel to each other on each side of it. Inside the square are the prison, the Dutch church, and the English church and school-room combined; built round it are the principal stores and places of business, the Standard Bank, the inn, the post-office and Landroost's office. Leydenburg boasts two banks, two billiard-rooms, two canteens, and a hotel which will compare favourably with most others in the Transvaal; there are three large stores where every description of goods is sold, from a plough to a bottle of Florida water, or a fiddle and a pair of babies' boots; besides several smaller ones, which keep a more limited stock in trade. The town itself is very prettily planted with magnificent poplars and blue gums.

All the hedges are of sweet-briar, and there are many very well-stocked gardens. Altogether it is a pretty little town, and strikes a traveller as very homely and cheerful after the miles of wild solitude he has passed through to reach it. Its inhabitants are all kindly and hospitable, and we were not long in feeling quite at home, and enjoying our enforced idleness, strolling about from store to store and hearing many things both strange and interesting from those who were themselves spending, and had spent, much of their lives cheerfully amidst hardships and dangers in this far-off country, all for the sake of returning home to the old country, in comfort and competence to finish their lives.

Mr. White arrived on the 4th, but he brought most ominous news with him, which we at first feared might put an obstacle in the way of our further advance. The troops were said to be all moving towards the Zulu border, and it was rumoured that an attack was in contemplation at the end of the month. If this happened, all the small tribes in the country would be on the look-out for plunder, knowing that any depredations or murders they might commit would pass unavenged on them, and be put down to the general account to be settled with the Zulus.

Next day Captains Clarke and Carrington rode in from Fort Weeber. They had left the fort with a strong patrol to look after a band of Secocoeni's Kaffirs, who had attacked a party of commisariat waggons returning to the town. The waggons had been under fire for seven hours, but not a man or

bullock had been wounded, which did not say much for the Kaffirs' aim. The patrol were unsuccessful in coming across the enemy, so were sent back to the fort, but the commanders rode on into the town to make arrangements for reinforcements and commissariat stores.

From them we learnt that things were in a very bad way at the front. Horses dying, men sick, want of stores, and general inability from want of strength to do anything effective. Medical comforts for the sick and wounded volunteers were most urgently needed. The ladies of Leydenburg at once took this matter up, and by means of subscription lists, concerts, and donations from the store-keepers, soon collected a sufficient stock of all the articles most necessary for the poor fellows, who had fallen fighting in the defence of the neighbourhood.

We were very anxiously awaiting the arrival of the weekly mail from Pretoria, which would bring the latest news from the South respecting the Zulus. It was due at mid-day on Monday, but as hour after hour passed away men's faces grew longer, and the chances of its having been captured by Kaffirs began to be freely discussed. However, just as evening came on, and hopes of its safety were growing fainter, to every one's relief the cart was seen slowly coming up the road. Its arrival had been delayed by the bad state of the roads, but not a sign of a Kaffir had been seen by the driver or either of his two passengers, which removed the anxiety of those who were nervous as to the safety of the town itself. The news from below was all reassuring, so by the

advice of Mr. White, who now took command of our party, we determined to make a start as soon as possible.

The waggon was promised by Tuesday night, which only left us one day to complete all arrangements, which we had left open till the arrival of the mail. There were horses to be bought, new boys to be hired, rusks to be baked, and a fresh supply laid in of spirits, vegetables, and fresh meat, as we might not see game for many days. Our great difficulty was to obtain boys who would go with us in the direction we purposed taking. Any number were willing and eager to go the other way, in any capacity, and at almost nominal wages; but at the sound of Sabie, or Pretorius Kop, they drew back, and neither promises of high wages nor ridicule of their cowardice could induce them to join our service. They were one and all afraid of being killed, and made no bones about stating their reasons; so much so, indeed, that we began to fear that the boys we already had, and who were themselves anything but delighted with their prospects, would desert us in the night, as the foreloupers had done before. Mr. White brought with him an addition to our party in a friend of his, who was the very man for the work. Woodward had spent the last three years in travelling about from one place to another amongst the Kaffirs themselves. He could speak Kaffir fairly well, and had a thorough knowledge of their ways and customs. He was a very keen sportsman, strong as a horse, careless of danger, and perfectly incapable of being turned back from

any enterprise he set out on. And, what was almost as important, was a most cheering companion and unfailing friend throughout the time we spent together.

He had his own waggon and boys, ready to start at a moment's notice ; and we made up our minds, rather than wait for boys to join us, to set off short-handed as we were, and trust to getting as many as we wanted from the small tribes, who would come to us, for no more payment than to be allowed to eat the surplus meat we shot.

Horses were not easy to come by, and those there were had very high prices put on them. A salted horse was valued at from 60*l.* to 100*l.*, and an unsalted one from 20*l.* to 40*l.* These high prices for the unsalted horses were, no doubt, greatly due to the extra demand, caused by the way the Government was buying them up all over the country. A "salted" horse, however, always commands a price, which to a person uninitiated with the full meaning of the word, appears simply ludicrous in comparison with the price paid for one not so designated. A salted horse is one which has had an attack of horse-sick, and recovered from it ; and when it is sold as such, the seller gives a written guarantee that, if the horse dies from horse-sick, he will refund the money to the buyer. Of course the guarantee is very often not worth the paper it is written on ; for, even if the giver is not a man of straw, yet by the time the horse falls ill, he may be at the other end of South Africa, and when out of the colony the guarantee is given in, there would be

great difficulty in making him refund the money. Besides these drawbacks to the written guarantee, it is necessary for the owner of the horse to produce two witnesses who will swear that the horse died of "horse-sick," and of nothing else. More likely than not the horse, if it dies at all, will die when out on a journey and far from any witnesses, in which case the buyer would have no redress. The best protection a buyer has is in the notoriety which any horse obtains that is really salted. Aged horses are few and far between, and in a country where every man knows more or less about every neighbour within a hundred or two of miles, there is not much difficulty in obtaining an impartial and uninterested opinion on any intended purchase.

There can be no question as to the advantages of buying salted horses and paying long prices for them, in preference to the unsalted and cheap, if they are intended for rough work in the low-lying parts of the country; for then sickness will, in nine cases out of ten, attack and carry off the unsalted horses one after the other.

Where horses are only wanted for regular work in regular hours, and can have proper stabling and careful attendance, many men will prefer to pay the small price for the unsalted, and very often better-looking animal, and trust to their precautions to keep the disease from them. The cases of horse-sick among horses well looked after are comparatively rare, even in the localities where the disease is most prevalent. Horse-sick is the only term ever used to express this epidemic, of which a large

proportion of the horses in the Transvaal annually perish.

Very few men out there have any veterinary skill at all, and what those few have, is purely empirical. I have often asked those who were supposed to know best, what the scientific name of "horse-sick" might be, and never received a satisfactory answer ; but it is generally put down as some kind of Pleuro-Pneumonia. The first symptoms are not always alike, but the most common are running at the nose and eyes, the eyes glazing over and losing all their lustre, then a general debility, and the horse refusing food of any sort. If it is being ridden or driven, possibly the only warning that the rider will have that there is anything worse than a cold the matter with his horse, will be the horse tumbling down beneath him, and dying almost immediately. If in a stable, and the remedies prove unavailing, the end will follow within a day or two of the first symptoms appearing. Boers have now grown so tired of vainly trying one remedy after the other, that as a rule they make no effort at all to save their horses, but allow nature to take its course, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred with their horses, the sickness terminates fatally.

In no country in the world is there greater need of first-class veterinary skill than in the Transvaal. The oxen die by the thousand every year from either lung-sick or red-water, and it is quite the exception for an animal to recover from an attack of either one or the other. As a rule, no medicine of any kind is given, and the wretched beast, when

attacked, is just left by the side of the road to die, or else is killed at once and its skin taken. The reason is simple—no one knows what medicines to give. The only attempts at physicking, are doses compounded of such violent drugs as yellow soap, tobacco-water, or brown sugar. These, if used at all, are used indiscriminately for all the diseases oxen are heirs to ; and I am certain, from my own experience, that the proportion cured by them is very slender in comparison to those they kill.

Sheep are, if possible, worse sufferers than either horses or cattle. Whole flocks are allowed to suffer, and sometimes die, from their various diseases, without an effort being made to save them, and without any precautions being taken to prevent the spread of the plague.

It is a most exceptional thing to find a flock of sheep anywhere, belonging to Boers, without a large percentage of them being diseased in some way or another. Pigs, dogs, chickens, ducks, and even cats, are all subject to diseases which appear to be peculiar to the country, and which hitherto no one has investigated, or found either cause, or remedy for. Till Government takes the matter in hand there can never be any material improvement, for the country is too poor, the farms too scattered, and the farmers too wanting in energy, if not in knowledge, for any Society to be formed amongst themselves out there, such as in Europe would soon be found to grapple with the difficulties.

CHAPTER XXIII.

No Grass—Loading the Waggons—Watch-dogs—Rough Roads—
The Sabie Valley—The Devil's Knuckles—Spitzkop—Gold-
Mines—Marking Claims—Alluvial Digging—Sluice-boxes
—Panning out.

THE grass round Leydenburg only existed in name, and there was nothing for the oxen to eat but dry scorched-up husks, so short that they could with difficulty pluck them. It was a grievous sight to watch the poor beasts every evening being driven back into their krall, as empty as when they went out in the morning. Woodward's span were in even a worse state than our own, and many of them had the hair worn off the skin, where the bones were pressing against it. As day by day they were rapidly losing the little strength left them, it became a matter of imperative necessity for us to make our start, and take them to a country where there would be good pasturage; and if delayed much longer, there was every probability of their becoming too weak to move away at all.

We redoubled our entreaties that no time should be lost in finishing up the waggon; and to our relief, on Wednesday, 10th June, it was pronounced ready for the road, and as strong as bolts, bars, stays, and plates would make it. No precaution had been

omitted or thought too trifling, that tended to secure us against accident or breakdown, after we were out of reach of help. We worked with a will the whole day through at loading in our stores, leaving behind all articles of weight which were not of absolute necessity, and only took with us enough of our stores for the three, or at most four, months we should be away. On Woodward's buck-waggon we placed all the most bulky stores, including eight meuds of crushed mealies for the horses, a bag of mealie meal, and a bag of Boer meal—the former for the boys' "pap," and the latter for our own and the driver's use—and a bag of salt for curing meat and skins. As each meud weighs about 200 pounds, these alone made a sufficient load for the waggon, considering the wretched state of the oxen and the heavy nature of the trek. In our own tent-waggon we put all the other stores, which in the aggregate came to about the same weight, though less bulky in their nature.

There is great art in loading a waggon properly, so that there may be an equal weight bearing on each wheel, and at the same time have every package so tightly packed in, that no amount of shaking or sudden jerking can disarrange them, or allow them to knock up against, and damage each other. At the same time they must be so arranged, that the boxes containing the stores most frequently wanted, can be got at without much difficulty; and due regard must be paid, to keeping articles of food from any such requisite commodities as oil, tar, grease, or in fact anything, the near proximity of which could impart

flavour or smell. When all these considerations have to be taken into account, the loading of a waggon is far from the easy matter it at first appears, and it requires a good deal of careful thought and skill, to accomplish it satisfactorily.

Woodward made a start early in the afternoon, but we were delayed until almost night, before we were able, amidst much cracking of whips, adieus and good wishes, to set out on the road to our destined hunting-ground. Mr. White remained behind to wait for the last news from down-country, and agreed to ride on and join us before we arrived at Spitzkop.

In distance Spitzkop is only twenty-five miles from Leydenburg, but the rough road makes it a good two days' trek for loaded waggons, even with fresh oxen; so with our worn and jaded spans it was uncertain how long a time we might be obliged to take over it.

We overtook W.'s waggon about four miles out of the township, and soon after outspanned for the night, as it had all been up-hill work. There was literally nothing at all for the oxen to pluck out, so after allowing them to drink as much water as they would, we tied them up at once, to prevent their straying away in search of food.

Although so near the town, we took every precaution against being surprised in the night. Both Woodward and A., who were both sleeping outside—the former on the ground with no covering but his blanket, and the latter in our small tent—had their guns loaded and ready by their sides, to give any in-

truders a very warm reception. From Leydenburg we had brought two dogs, which although, as we subsequently discovered, worthless for shooting purposes, and rank curs, were capital watch-dogs, and gave tongue at either friend or foe. Although they more than once called us out of our beds in a hurry for no cause at all, yet we always had the comfortable assurance that no one could either leave the camp or come into it, without our attention being called, by the barking of these dogs. We made a frugal supper off rusks and coffee ; and as the cold made it impossible to sit up talking, we very soon turned in between the blankets, and slept as we deserved to after a long day's hard work.

Next morning we were up with the sun, and made a short trek before breakfast, to a place where the oxen were able to pick up a few mouthfuls of coarse green grass, from the sides of a small stream which crossed our path.

We had heard much of the roughness of the road we had to travel over, but still we were in no way prepared for what our second trek brought us to. The beaten trek we had been following seemed to lose itself amidst huge broken masses of ironstone-rock and quartz, which the waggon had to be pulled over ; and the sudden ascents and dips down, which lay in the road, covered as they were with these great pieces of stone, made me fear to look back at the waggon, as it slid and jumped from rock to rock. In many places where the trek led us either up or down these hills of solid rock, it resembled long flights of very rough and broken, broad stone steps ; and the

furious jolting of the waggon, as it crashed from one to the other, made me expect every instant, to see the wheels splintering into a thousand fragments.

But everything is easy when one is used to it, and after the waggon had sustained no damage from its first day's trekking, we took it all as a matter of course, and even learned to keep our seats on the front-board, however rough the road might be. As we advanced, the aspect of the country changed entirely, and we seemed to have altogether left behind us, the endless weary expanses of dried-up veldt.

Our afternoon trek took us up a long and almost interminable ascent ; but when at the top we had the consolation of knowing that we were at our highest point, and were at an elevation of about 8000 feet above the level of the sea. At this point in the road a deep cutting had been made round the hill, and a sudden turn of the trek laid before us a magnificent panorama of the Sabie valley. Down below us lay hills and peaks and valleys, with innumerable small streams winding and glittering in between them. Here and there a dark black ravine seemed to sever the hills from their very foundations, and pierce hundreds of feet into the deep bowels of the earth ; and over the side, like a streak of silver, poured some tiny waterfall. Intersecting these were kloofs, almost as deep, but choked up with waving tree-ferns, wild olive-trees, and a hundred kinds of mimosa of every shade and hue. Trailing over and round them grew flaming scarlet creepers, and bright red cacti, which filled up every nook and

cranny between the trees and rocks. To our left, in the far distance, an occasional gleam showed where the Sabie itself wound along on its way to join the Crocodile and Komati ; while, ahead of us, the hills and peaks grew more and more indistinct, till there was nothing but a deep purple misty line against the clear blue sky, more than a hundred miles away from us.

Crash—went our best and largest iron cooling-pot, and after it our only iron kettle, against an extra large rock, to which the oxen, left to their own devices, had drawn the waggon ; and immediately our thoughts and attention were brought from the contemplation of this marvellous picture, with a sudden jerk, to our own more particular and common-place affairs.

We soon had the waggon back in its proper trek, and hung the remaining pots and kettles out of further danger.

At the foot of the next hill we came upon a patch of old grass which had escaped the general firing, and at once outspanned, although some distance from water, to give the oxen a chance of filling themselves. To our keen disappointment, however, after just fumbling about with their muzzles, and sniffing at it, they put up their heads, and one and all refused to eat. Whether the stalks were too hard and dry, or whether it was of a kind their instincts warned them to leave, we could not decide ; but although to our eyes there were very pretty pickings, yet they absolutely refused to have any of it. As it was of no use stopping where they would

not eat, and where there was no water for them to drink, we inspanned again at once, and started off. Just as we were upon the trek, up rode Mr. White with the four new horses ; and as we were now on the trek, all together, for the first time, a halt was called while we served out a tot all round to drink success to our undertaking.

Spitzkop looked very close to us when we started off next morning, but we had three hard treks before reaching it, for the heavy work and starvation had told considerably on the oxen. Two out of Woodward's span had to be put out, and were only able to keep up alongside the others, let alone help in pulling the waggon. All our span were still fit for work, but their ribs were still more painfully visible than before, through their rough, poverty-stricken skins ; and nothing could have been less like the sleek, fat span of a month ago than the poor little fellows who now only with difficulty moved along at all.

Our second trek took us over the most dreaded part of the road, called the Devil's Knuckles. These Infernal knuckles consist of four steep hills, standing boldly out by themselves, and joining each other ; and the trek of necessity leads over and down, each of their almost vertical summits. The sides are too steep and stony for any amount of cutting to make a safe road. When on the top of one of these points, the waggon looked as if it were stuck on the point of a sugar-loaf, and that any attempt at descent must result in a headlong roll, down many hundred feet over the rocky precipice on either side. The ascents

were so steep that we had to use both spans to each waggon; and the spanning them in and out occupied a considerable time. So many waggons and oxen have been lost at this part of the road, that it was a load off our minds when we were safely over, and again on more level land.

It was past eight o'clock, and quite dark, when we outspanned in the centre of the little mining township of Spitzkop, which takes its name from the hill situated about two miles away, rising up to a steep sharp point (Dutch, *spitz*).

The township consists of one iron store, and some thirty or forty tents and mud huts, scattered along the sides of a stream which rises beyond the Kop and flows down into the Crocodile river. In and around the stream all the mining claims are situated.

At present all the gold found there is alluvial, but every man works on in the hopes of discovering the reef which will make his fortune. For alluvial digging a good supply of water is absolutely necessary, and this is the great drawback to the Spitzkop diggings, for much ground known to be well worth working is so far from the water, as to make it impracticable to utilize it.

This kind of digging is of the simplest nature, and a raw beginner has almost the same chances of success as the oldest hand.

The intending digger first pays 5s. to the gold inspector, who resides on the spot, and from him receives a licence, to dig and mark out a claim, extending over a month, and each month it has to be renewed. He then selects his claim of forty feet

square, and if possible with a stream of water running through it. If there is no stream, he will have to pay the proprietor of a dam, as every drop of water becomes a most valuable possession in the vicinity of an alluvial digging. He must have previously provided himself with a sluice-box, pickaxes, spades, long-handled miners' shovels, crowbars, and various other tools of a similar nature. The sluice-box is an oblong wooden box, open at the top, about two feet broad, two feet high, and varying from six to ten feet long. This is placed at the far end of the claim, at the bottom of the stream, in such a manner that every drop of water rising from the claim has to pass through it.

All down the bottom of this box are fixed rough stones and pebbles, or sometimes slabs of wood or iron running across at an angle of thirty-five, which is called the Venetian ripple, from its likeness to the blind of the same name. Others use a kind of iron grating exactly similar to the gutta-percha mats used for doorways. The digger and his boys—for he will have engaged from three to a dozen Kaffirs to assist him—then commence at the other end to shovel the soil from the banks into the stream, which, dissolving and sifting it, carries it in a semi-liquid state through the sluice-box. The gold, by far the heaviest particles, falls to the bottom, and is held securely by the ripples in the box, while the mud, sand, and small stones, are hurried on down the stream. By degrees the whole surface of the claim is worked out, and the digger gets lower and lower, but always preserves the stream in its proper channel

although the sluice-box will be perhaps thirty or forty feet lower down than when he commenced digging before he reaches the "bottoming." This bottoming at Spitzkop consists of a black clay; and lower than this experience has taught him that it is of no use digging, for not another speck of gold will reward his exertions. Of course for this kind of digging it is necessary that the claim should be on the side of a hill, as otherwise the water would not keep its flow when the channel was thus deepened. At stated intervals, which depend upon the prosperity of the digger, the contents of his sluice-box are washed, or panned out. This is done by hand, with an iron basin. The digger stands in the stream with the basin, and fills it about half full of the conglomeration of stones, mud, sand, and it is hoped gold, collected by the furrows of his sluice-box. He then puts the basin half under the water, and with a see-saw motion works the contents backwards and forwards, gradually letting all the surface matter wash out. Any stones he picks out with his fingers. This is continued until nothing remains in the basin but black sand and gold. If there are only a few specks it is called "a colour;" but there will generally be more substantial tokens than that.

He then picks out the flakes of gold, however small, and as a rule deposits them in a small chamois-skin bag; but an empty match-box, pill-box, or tobacco-pouch, are equally handy.

If a digger is "flush," he will not wash out more than once a month, and very likely only once every quarter. If, on the other hand, he is "hard up,"

and living from hand to mouth, he will be obliged to waste his time in washing out whenever he requires to make any purchases. For their own protection diggers have to be of a very suspicious nature, and they by no means appreciate outsiders even looking on while they are at work in the claim; while any stranger would get a very sharp flea in his ear who attempted to watch the process of panning out, for that would at once reveal the richness or poverty of the claim. If the report spread that so-and-so's claim was turning out well, all the diggers who were doing badly would at once desert their claims, and mark out fresh ones all round the supposed rich one.

When the excitement of the life is taken away, it leaves very little in it to be desired. Not one digger in a hundred has left the diggings any richer than when he went there, and in all not a dozen have made enough to retire on. No coal-heaver or navvy has a tithe of the hardships and fatigue the digger cheerfully undergoes. All day long toiling hard in a broiling sun, and up to his middle in water, and at night no comforts of any kind, when he returns to his hut. Fuel is so expensive that he can only afford just enough to cook his bit of meat, and billy of tea or coffee, and he must then turn into bed, to escape the cutting draughts which pierce through his thin walls of mud or canvas.

He is cut off from all society with the outer world, and is never sure that a night will pass without an attack from hostile natives. All the necessaries of life cost him four times what he would pay elsewhere, and often enough they are not procurable at all, when

any accident happens to the transport, or the roads are impassable from one cause or another.

Gold is bought by the store at 3*l.* 12*s.* the ounce, and the diggers take it out in goods. So if it was not for the many bad debts contracted, the store-keepers would do well, As it is, however, they are obliged to have monthly accounts with their customers, and if a run of ill-luck follows a man up, he is unable to pay for several months, and will then possibly make off leaving behind only his tools, which are not worth a week's "tucker."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Broedung-stick Creek—Reefing—The Berg—"Steamer" dies—
Physicing Oxen—Fire—Rain—A Narrow Path—A Trans-
vaal Storm—Food scarce—A Horse strays—A Hill of Snakes
—Klip-springers.

OUR first trek out of Spitzkop brought us to a place named Broedung-stick Creek, where four miners have discovered a reef running into the side of the hill. Along the base of the hill runs a fine head of water, which will be available for any crushing-machinery which may ultimately be set up.

In this same stream two of the four work for alluvial gold to pay current expenses, while the others tunnel into the reef to discover its value. When we were there they had cut a passage four feet high and three broad, for nearly seventy feet in, and with the most favourable results.

The specks of gold were so coarse as to be plainly visible by the light of our candles, in various places along the cutting.

It is not an invariably good sign for the metal to be in such large atoms, and the best paying quartz is often that in which no sign of gold is visible, until it is all crushed to powder, and washed out. In such an un-get-at-able place as Broedung-stick Creek there would have to be as much as 3 oz. of gold to the ton

weight of quartz, to pay the vast expenses of bringing up machinery from the coast, and paying the wages of those who worked at it. Four pounds a week is the usual sum given to "wages-men," who are, as a rule, those who have been broken by a continued run of bad luck in their own claims. These appear very high wages; but when the hardships are considered, with the fact that even an economical man's monthly bill at the store will run from four to six pounds, it is not to be wondered at that men will not do the work for less.

We outspanned for the night on the other side of Spitzkop, close to the place we had chosen for making the descent of the Berg. This Berg is a spur of the Draconsberg Range, and runs for many miles like a precipice, forming a sort of boundary between the two table-lands; the one on which Spitzkop is situated, the other some 2000 feet below, into which we were soon to descend.

Next morning, soon after we had accomplished the long and somewhat hazardous descent, two waggons appeared on the top and followed us down, but not successfully. One of their after oxen slipped on the uneven rock, fell down, and before the waggon could be stopped the fore-wheel had passed over its hind-quarters, which necessitated its being killed on the spot. When they reached the bottom we discovered that the waggons belonged to a neighbouring farmer, who was bound on the same errand as ourselves, but to a different part of the veldt.

During our next trek we had to leave behind "Steamer," one of our best oxen. It had been

ailing for a day or two, and the rough medicine we had given him did no good, even if it did not harm him. It is rather a complicated operation to give an ox a dose. First, his head has to be tied down to one of the lower spokes of the wheel. A rim has to be passed round his fore-legs and another round his hind-legs, and drawn tight to prevent him kicking. Then another rim is passed right round his body, and with a very slight pull down he comes, perfectly helpless and motionless, while the medicine—in this case a mixture of salt and soap—is poured down his unwilling throat.

When we outspanned for the night, close to the other two waggons, we sent back for our ox; but the boys were unable to make him move, so we reluctantly left him to his fate—most probably to fall an easy prey to the first lion or leopard that passed that way.

As grass fires are constantly sweeping over this part of the veldt, we determined to clear a broad belt all round our encampment, and in doing so we very nearly burnt our own and the two near us. We were cautiously burning piece by piece, and beating it out as it spread, when a sudden gust of wind scattered the flaming particles over a broader area than we could keep command of, and in a second a long line of fire was advancing towards our camp.

We just had time to beat down the grass in front of our own waggons, but all the trek tow was singed and some burnt, and we were obliged to cut all the horses' rims, to drive them round quickly enough, out of the flames. The Dutchman, in charge of the

other waggons had to cut all his oxen loose, as unfortunately they were tied up to the dusselboom for the night, and the flames swept under and past his waggons; but luckily the grass in that particular spot was very short and green, so no further damage was done. Several hours were spent in recapturing the horses and oxen, which had all made off like mad things, but being hungry, had soon stopped to eat their supper when out of reach of the flames. Far into the night the fire spread, driven by the wind over miles and miles of country; but as the dew fell it gradually lost its strength, and by morning only the smouldering stumps of dried wood, showed how recent it had been.

Possibly the Dutchman did not think we were desirable travelling acquaintances, for he seemed excessively glad when we announced our intention of moving off early next morning, in a contrary direction to the place in which he was to wait for his master. For breakfast we finished all that was left of the meat which we had brought from Leydenburg, and we had to eke it out with mealie-meal "pap" or porridge. We were now entirely dependent on our rifles for food. While the waggons treked along, following the wheels of some waggons of a previous year, we scoured the country for miles on either side in search of game of any kind; but when we rejoined in the middle of the day, each expecting to find the other with game, we all had the same tale to tell—not a sign of game of any description, nor any fresh spoor either. Rain came on heavily as we were starting off again, and put

treking and hunting out of the question ; so we had to make the best dinner we could out of rusks, biscuits, and jam, for the rain prevented us having any fire at which to cook even coffee or rice.

We stretched a sheet round the wheels of the waggon to obtain some shelter from the blinding rain, and dug trenches round to let the drippings drain off.

As soon as the darkness set in we all laid down and tried to sleep, a little out of temper, very wet, cold, and hungry.

At sunrise next morning the rain ceased, and the sun made an effort to break through the mists, but was soon hidden again by dark black rain-clouds. We were again unable to make a fire, so had to content ourselves with a repetition of the previous night's dinner, of biscuits and rusks, for our breakfast.

In spite of a heavy drizzle we unspanned and made a very long trek, up to the axles in mud, hoping to reach a game locality. We passed over the worst place we had yet come across. A narrow neck of land, almost resembling a mighty wall or barricade, with a clear fall on one side into a dark abyss, and on the other side an almost equally precipitous descent. There was not more than a foot to spare on either side of the wheels, and a single lurch or slip would have been certain destruction to waggon and oxen.

On the other side Woodward's waggon, which led the way, stuck fast in a deep mud-hole, and no effort of his oxen could pull it out. As half his waggon was

still on this narrow neck of land, we had the greatest difficulty in driving our own span past, one by one, to his assistance; and it took so long to get the whole span past, that night set in before we had time for another trek. Not a trace of game had we seen all day; and although we spent the short time before dark with our shot-guns, in search of fowl, not a feather was anywhere to be come across.

However, as we were able to light a fire and cook rice, potatoes, and coffee, we did not retire to rest with the same sense of empty discontent as on the previous evening.

During the night a tremendous thunder-storm fell on us. The boys, who had not taken the precaution to dig trenches round their waggon, were almost drowned in the blankets before they could get out, for the rain poured down in torrents. The lightning illuminated all the country for miles round in long continuous green flashes, and an occasional fiery forked gleam seemed to rend the sky in two, while the peals of thunder made us think the very ground and waggons were shaking, as they resounded backwards and forwards through the rocks and ravines. Boys and oxen were cowering on the ground, not daring to lift their heads, and we ourselves were too awed and subdued by the mighty force of the contending elements to do other than contemplate in silence.

The storm ceased almost as suddenly as it came on, and the sun rose clear and bright upon the soaking ground. A bitterly cold wind sprung up later, which chilled us all to the marrow, for our clothes were still damp from the rain.

The storm had entirely washed away the track we had been following, but as we were now in sight of Loses Kop, near which we were to make our final descent into the bush veldt, we struck out straight for it, and took no particular thought of following anybody else's previous road. Our efforts to find game were again unsuccessful, and worse than all we failed to discover any spoor of Eland, to find which game we had made a considerable détour from the nearest way to Pretorius Kop, which we had selected to be our head-quarters. Although unsuccessful in finding any four-footed game, I managed to bag two couple of plovers and a partridge.

As I was walking up to where the latter lay after I had shot it, swish went a hawk past my head, and, swooping on the dead bird, would undoubtedly have made off with it had I not been successful in laying it dead beside the coveted spoil.

The horses not in use had up to this been allowed to follow of their own accord behind the waggons; but when we came to a halt for the night, it was discovered that one of them, and the most valuable of all, was missing. Darkness prevented a very prolonged search for it, so we settled that in the morning Woodward, Mr. White, and two of the boys, all mounted, should set off to bring back the wanderer, while A. and myself did our best to make an addition to the larder. The rain and wind both cleared off in the evening, and a fine night gave promise of a change for the better in the weather. For our dinner we concocted a capital stew with the plovers and partridge, three small soup squares, bits of rusk,

biscuit, and potatoes, flavoured with pepper, sugar, and spice. As it was our first "square meal" for three days, we all enjoyed it accordingly, and it tended to soothe our irritation at the delay caused by the loss of the horse. The boys were not at all pleased at having no meat, as they always count upon one long gorge when they are on a hunting excursion, to in some degree make up to them for the extra hard work and danger they undergo.

They prowled round with the most lugubrious faces, murmuring "icona nyama" (no meat) as if they had been accustomed to have it every day of their lives, instead of when at home only tasting it at very long intervals.

Next morning, when the party had set off after the horse, we made a short trek to a patch of old grass, among the roots of which the oxen were able to pick up a few blades of fresh shoots. Leaving the oxen to fill themselves as best they could, A. and I set off with our rifles in different directions to search for game. The ground was too hilly and stony for horses, so we had to proceed on foot. I made my way towards a huge mound of decayed and crumbling granite, round the base of which were small clumps of thorns, and patches of tall reeds and grasses. For several hours I roamed along, in and out of the bushes, but not a sign of game could I find. As there was nothing to be seen from below, I made up my mind to climb to the top of the hill, and take a view of the surrounding country.

The sun was now blazing fiercely, but after all the wet, cold weather, it was a delightful change.

Before I reached the top, however, I began to think that it was quite possible to have too much of a good thing, for the rays glancing back from the slabs of stone made the heat almost overpowering.

The sun had drawn out from the holes and crevices innumerable lizards, varying in size from an inch to a yard, and several times I had to jump quickly back to avoid treading on snakes, who were either not sufficiently warmed by the sun to move quickly, or who were not inclined to make way for me. Once I came across a large boa, whose length I could not tell, as he was half covered over by a lump of rock. I should have liked to kill the beast, for he was an unusually large one; but as I did not care to spoil any chance of game by firing my rifle, and did not fancy tackling him at close quarters, with no better weapons than stones, I thought it better to leave him unmolested. As I neared the summit, which I expected to be a table-land of two or three acres in extent, I took every precaution to move noiselessly and unseen. When I had climbed up, however, I found that instead of a table-land, the hill was hollowed, and in a perfect round basin, gradually deepening in the centre to some hundred feet deeper than the sides, and evidently the crater of some extinct volcano. As I was at the time more eager to provide our dinner than study geology, it did not interest me as much as a fine klip-springer bôk, which disappeared over the opposite side before I had time to get a shot.

The klip-springer resembles a very fine sturdy lamb in size and shape, but there the resemblance ceases ;

for instead of soft fleecy wool, it has a skin covered with long and crinkled bristles of a yellowish black colour, and its feet are rather like those of a pig. It is the chamois of South Africa, and is never found except among the rocks and boulders. The bristles are valuable as a stuffing for saddles, and make the best I ever saw, for the leather will all be worn out, before the bristles have clogged up, or lost their elasticity.

It was hopeless to attempt to follow the bôk, and as I was aware of a habit peculiar to it, of always returning within an hour or two, to the place from whence it is disturbed, I made up my mind to rest for awhile under cover of an overhanging rock, and put my patience to the test.

I had plenty to occupy my attention with in watching the different kinds of lizards darting about from place to place. As long as I remained motionless, they would creep up on to my very boots and rifle without fear, but with the movement of an eyelid, almost, they disappeared.

One old fellow especially amused me. He was nearly two feet long, with a dark brown body and a bright red tail. For some time he cautiously watched me from the protection of a crack in the rock, but gradually gaining confidence, he came out and joined his children and grandchildren, and appeared to be sedately watching them all playing in the sun. Just then a big blue-bottle fly settled down close to my boot. The old fellow sighted it in an instant, and made a quick movement in my direction; but then, not sure of my harmlessness, pulled up short and eyed me most suspiciously. As I remained motion-

less, and the fly began to exhibit signs of moving, he could no longer restrain himself, but with a dart so quick that my eyes could not follow, he had fixed the unconscious fly with his long flexible tongue, and not liking to trust himself longer than necessary in so dangerous a vicinity, had taken up his former position in the crevice. There he proceeded to devour his prey with the most evident appreciation, but never taking his eyes off me.

Two hours had elapsed, and I was thinking of making a move, despairing of the bôk coming back, when, in the identical place he had previously disappeared from my view, I saw his head reappearing. I was myself well hidden by the rock, and it also served as a rest for my rifle. I had taken the precaution of adjusting the sight to 200 yards, which I judged to be the distance across the basin. The klip-springer evidently had suspicions that all was not right, and for some moments only bobbed his head up and down, taking hurried looks over; but seeing nothing unusual, he at last stepped boldly up on to the top of the ledge and stood out clearly against the sky. He could not have given me a better opportunity, and, taking a very steady careful aim, I fired. Not waiting for the smoke to clear away, I started off at a run across the basin, but when I reached the spot where the bôk had stood, there was nothing to be seen of it.

The decline, however, was so steep that it might very easily have rolled down. I kicked over a large stone to see the direction it would take, and then followed it down. A few yards down I discovered a patch of blood, so it was with a good heart I made

the best of my way down, until I came upon the body of the bôk wedged in a deep crevice between two huge rocks, and quite dead. I did not lose any time in attempting to extricate it by myself, as there was every chance if I did get down I should be unable to get out again unassisted, but set off at once to the waggon. Those who had been out after the lost horse, came in at the same time as myself. They had not been successful in bringing back the horse, but had spoorred it for many miles on the trek we had ourselves come along. So there was every probability of its having gone straight back to its stable in Leydenburg; and although annoyed at the loss of its services, we did not feel any further anxiety about its safety. Our confidence in the horse's sagacity was fully justified, for on our return, we ascertained that it had arrived at Spitzkop within twelve hours of the time we missed it, and had there been taken care of until an opportunity occurred of sending it safely back to Leydenburg. In all the large tract of land the searchers for the horse had traversed, they had not seen a single head of large game, nor even the spoor of any which had lately been about.

We lost no time in fetching back my bôk, and then made another trek before darkness set in.

The question of our chef, "What I cook to-day, boss?" had during the last few days become rather painful, when the answer had to be, "Boil plenty of coffee," but now all that was changed, and we were able to indulge to our hearts' content in juicy tender meat, which tasted to us far better than the primest venison ever set on table.

CHAPTER XXV.

Loses Kop—The Honey-bird—Hunting a Horse—A Shooting-Horse and its Treatment—Flying Serpents—Sand River—Partridges—Pretorius Kop—Our permanent Camp.

OUR first trek in the morning brought us close up to Loses Kop, and after outspanning for a while we made our final descent of the Berg into the Low Country, or Bush Veldt, which is not much above the level of the sea, and stretches away, although here and there crossed by hills, to Delagoa Bay. The change of temperature was most remarkable. On the high veldt above, and only two hours' journey away, we had experienced sharp frosts every night; and, except in the middle of the day, when the sun was shining, we had need of the thickest clothing. Every morning the water in the bottles was solid ice, and the ground white with rime. Now, the heat at noon was so severe that treking was out of the question, and at night the thermometer did not register below 78°. The most welcome change of all was a good supply of fine young grass for the oxen and horses, instead of the miserable dry husks they had been slowly starving on.

A small grey bird with a reddish beak, the size of a sparrow, had flown alongside and round the waggon for the last mile of our trek, making a shrill hissing

cry, and sometimes almost flying in the faces of the drivers; and I noticed that the boys were regarding it with peculiar attention and talking amongst themselves in reference to it.

On asking what caused the unusual interest of the boys in, to all appearance, a very common-place little bird, it was explained that this little insignificant visitor was the far-famed Honey-bird. Often and often had we heard tales of its marvellous instinct in pointing out the nests of wild honey, but we had always received them with a considerable portion of disbelief as travellers' tales.

As soon as the oxen were outspanned and the boys at liberty, three of them, armed with buckets, spades, and hatchets, set off towards the bird, which had flown to a neighbouring tree as soon as it perceived that our attention was successfully attracted. A. and myself, to whom it was as strange an adventure as it was novel, accompanied the boys. As soon as we reached the tree the little fellow had perched on, it flitted on to the next, and then on again when we came up. Once it took such a long flight that we were unable to follow it.

The bird, however, after waiting for us a short time in vain, came flying back, uttering its shrill cry to let us know its whereabouts.

As if it had been warned by this not to proceed too far ahead of us, our guide now took very short flights, and, if there was no tree to rest on, took short circles in the air until we came up to him.

For nearly a mile this was kept up, and as the way grew more difficult and the bushes more dense, our own

faith in the bird was rapidly giving place to irritation at what began to look very like a trick of the others at the expense of our inexperience.

However, the boys seemed so genuinely astonished at our doubts, that we still followed on.

At last the bird stopped altogether in a small clump of some dozen minosa-trees, all growing within a few feet of one another.

When we came up to it, instead of, as heretofore, flying off in a straight line, it just flitted on to an opposite tree, remained there a few moments, and then back to its previous position. This was its signal that the nest was close at hand. The boys examined the trunks of the trees round most carefully, but could find no opening where the nest could by any possibility be situated. The bird grew more and more angry and indignant at what it evidently considered our extreme stupidity, and flapped its little wings, and redoubled the shrill cries which it had ceased to utter while leading us to the spot. At last, losing all patience, it actually settled on a piece of the stem of one of the trees it had been persistently flitting backwards and forwards in front of. The boys now, paying more attention to this particular tree, perceived just above where the bird had perched a small hole, and round it a kind of cement. While we were watching a bee flew out, which made it certain that the nest was within the trunk. The driver of Woodward's waggon, who was an old hand at the work, at once climbed up the tree with a hatchet, and under his direction the others collected armfuls of dried grass. Taking a large handful of

this he lighted it, and then struck with the hatchet at the mouth of the narrow hole.

At the first blow a quantity of mud, wax, and decayed wood fell to the ground, with which the bees had skilfully walled up a large portion of the decayed wood. Out swarmed a cloud of bees, and now his burning grass came into operation. As quickly as they flew out their wings were singed in the flames and they dropped helpless to the ground. A. and myself had retreated to a safe distance from the tree, but the boys stood close up, hardly caring if they were stung or not. In a very few minutes all the occupants of the nest were destroyed; but new comers were constantly arriving, which made close quarters anything but pleasant. Not much cutting was necessary, to lay bare a large portion of the combs, which were laid horizontally across the entire width of the hollow portion of the tree. The upper combs are always the freshest, and therefore the best, so we at once set to work to fill our three buckets with them. When these were all full to the top there was still enough honey left to fill at least another three or four, for the combs went down to the very bottom of the tree, as we discovered by forcing down a long stick. There was already more than enough honey for all our wants, and the boys were confident that they could obtain fresh supplies in the same manner as often as they cared to follow the birds, so we left the remainder where it was for the bees which survived our felonious attack. Before leaving we carefully fixed a comb filled with honey on the nearest bush, and our late guide flew

down and commenced his well-earned repast as soon as we had turned our backs on the spot. The Kaffirs would much prefer not to take any honey at all, than depart with their spoil and not leave a portion for the bird. They firmly believe that if they thus defraud the bird of its just rights, it will follow them up, and at a future time, instead of leading them to honey, will entice them into the lair of a lion, or to a nest in which some deadly snake lies concealed.

It is impossible to explain the marvellous characteristic of the honey-bird, without crediting it with powers of reasoning which are almost human. No one who has once witnessed the manner in which the bird will persistently follow a waggon for miles, but will leave it and join the first man or men who leave the trek and evince a disposition to follow, can for an instant believe that the bird betrays the nest unconsciously. How the birds have acquired the knowledge that men desire honey, and that they have the power to gratify their desire by forcing open the hidden hoards; how they calculate, as they assuredly do, upon themselves reaping the benefit of being accomplices and instigators of the theft; and how they have learnt to lose their natural fear of mankind and trust themselves almost within his grasp; how they are taught their various devices for attracting man's attention and leading him to the spots where the bees have made their nests; are questions which, perpetually discussed amongst those who, although, not scientific naturalists, have spent their lives observing nature, can never be answered or explained.

Before dusk I took a long ride following the side of the berg on the look-out for koodoo, a large bôk with very fine twisted horns, which frequents this part of the veldt. If there were any about I did not come across them. On the way home, in a patch of tall grass up to the horse's back, a fine reed-bôk sprung up almost under its feet. The horse reared up and so disturbed my aim that, although within twenty yards, the bullet went far to one side. The bôk, unharmed, stood still a moment some distance off to look back and inspect the disturber of its peace. This time I jumped to the ground holding the reins of my horse—which was too excited to stand by itself—under my arm. Just as I had drawn a clear sight on the reed-bôk's shoulder, back jumped the horse, pulling me over on to my knees, almost wrenching my arm out of the socket, and at the same time pulling the trigger, but luckily the ball passed harmlessly into the air. The horse, still more startled at the report and at the ball whizzing past its ear, dashed off at a gallop through the reeds. Labouring, I made my way after it as fast as I could force a passage; and a very long trudge I had before I came anywhere near even. For several times in succession it allowed me to approach within a few paces, but just as I put out my hand to catch the now broken reins, with a rear and a snort it started off again and galloped, until a particularly green patch of grass induced it to stop and take a mouthful.

At last remorse seemed to seize it for such ungrateful conduct, and in answer to my persuasive calls, and a handful of especially green grass, it

walked quietly up to me, looking as if it had done something rather clever than otherwise. It is worse than useless to punish a horse for running away after it is caught, as the only result will be that on the next opportunity it will run away again and perhaps never let itself be caught at all. There is nothing more trying to the temper, though, than for a horse not only to spoil an easy shot in breaking away, but to give its master a weary tramp of a good many miles in pursuit of it. A thoroughly reliable well-mannered shooting-horse is worth almost any sum, and one such horse is worth a dozen others, although they may all be faster and better-looking. A thorough good shooting-horse must know almost as much as its master. It must learn to stop dead the moment the rider throws one foot out of the stirrup or gives a whistle. It must not mind the rifle being fired off resting on or under its very head, and must remain perfectly motionless while its rider takes aim. When the reins are thrown on the ground, the horse must remain on the spot till its master returns, however long he may be away. Neither must it mind the smell of blood, nor be frightened at the proximity of large game, either stampeding past in numbers or standing at bay singly when wounded. The horse must have an instinctive knowledge of ground which will not bear its weight, and of grasses and herbs which will make it ill.

A long-winded animal is absolutely necessary, and speed is often very useful, but not as a rule necessary, and when wanting can generally be made up for by

either cunning on the rider's part or endurance on the horse's.

The shooting-horse must be hardy enough not to sustain injury from exposure by night, nor by taking water and food whenever the occasion offers, without reference to whether it is working at the time or going on a journey. All these are the qualifications of a good shooting-horse.

Such a one is difficult, but not impossible, to procure, and when once in possession ought never to be parted with. A man should always feed his own horse, so as to concentrate all its powers of affection and trust upon himself. If possible, he should avoid punishment altogether, for it is fatal if the horse once begins to fear his master. From that moment he can never be certain when it will make a bolt, and will not have the same power of soothing its fears at strange scents and startling sights, which at times may be of immeasurable importance.

A most excellent plan of attaching a horse to the person is to invariably carry about, in the pocket, a few grains of corn, a bit of biscuit, sugar, bread, or any other dainty of the sort, and give it from the hand when out shooting, either as a reward for remaining steady at a shot, or when the rider returns after leaving it standing with the reins over its head. On these simple precautions the chance is much diminished of being suddenly left in the lurch on foot, to face the attack of a wounded animal or any other danger.

The grass was so good that we should have liked

to allow the oxen to run loose and graze all night ; but lions were too numerous to make it a safe proceeding, and as soon as darkness set in they were all tied up to the dusselbooms. The boys had some superstition concerning winged-serpents, which were supposed to frequent these parts of the veldt, and attributed the cries of the night-hawks to these mythical monsters. They were also very nervous about lions, as only two of them had ever before been in the country where they are found, and these two so exaggerated the dangers to be apprehended, which they at last began to believe themselves, that not a boy would have stirred outside the fires for any earthly consideration.

This was the first night of our waggon life that we were able to consume an unlimited quantity of firewood, and the boys made the most of it.

During the afternoon they had cut down and brought to the waggons all the dead and dying trees and branches for some distance round, so all through the night the fires were kept piled up high with flaming and crackling boughs, making a blaze that no lion would approach within a mile of. We sat up far into the night with no more covering but our shirts on, for the warm temperature, even away from the fires, was such a delightful change from the bitter cold we had lately experienced, that we felt no inclination to turn in. The jackals and wild dogs, wandering round and round, kept up a yelping chorus until the dawn broke, when they showed their sagacity by disappearing.

Before the sun was up we treked on to Sand

River. From the name we expected to find a clear, bright, swift river, running along a channel of auriferous glittering sand, so we were disappointed to find instead a dull, muddy, sluggish stream, with slippery clay banks. The water was so thick and dirty that bathing was out of the question, and even the coffee made with it tasted muddy and unpalatable.

Two more long treks brought us to the other side of Pretoria Kop, and there we outspanned again for the night, taking the usual precautions of providing ourselves with a mighty pile of firewood, as the locality is especially famous for lions. During the day we killed a very curious and beautiful little partridge which is peculiar to the bush-veldt. It bears the same relationship to the large species as a bantam to a barn-door fowl, and when on the ground struts along and spreads out its tail feathers in exactly the same consequential manner. It is very swift on the wing, and is difficult to shoot, twisting in and out among the bushes and trees, but is dryer and not so well flavoured as the bigger bird.

We shot another variety rather smaller than the English partridge, but resembling it in plumage, with the exception of the breast, which is white and crossed with black bars, and of the legs, which are longer and more brilliant yellow.

The honey-bird again made its appearance, and this time pointed out a nest concealed in an old ant-hill; but the honey was not as good as that we found in the tree, and we left the greater part undisturbed.

Long Kop, or Saddle-back Kop, was now only five or six miles away, and we were told the boundary of the terrible tsetse fly ran along the base of it from north to south. As every year the line may either advance or retire, we dared not venture the horses and oxen any nearer. There was a very bad supply of water where we were outspanned, and the grass was not especially good, so we determined to trek about three miles to the south-east of Pretoria Kop, where we had discovered two deep water-holes and good pasturage, before making our permanent camp.

Accordingly at break of day we inspanned the oxen and soon reached our selected camping-ground. The two holes of water formed parts of a now dried-up vley, which I have before explained is a chain of narrow marshes and pools, generally connected by a stream, which in the wet season may be a rushing torrent, but in the dry relapses into a dry channel. It was a very favourable spot for our purpose. In a straight line between the two most prominent landmarks of the neighbourhood, it would always be a comparatively easy place to find from any part of the veldt, however thickly wooded. Within a stone's throw lay the footpath used by the Kaffirs on their way to or from the diamond or gold fields, and by all going to Delagoa Bay from the Transvaal, so there was always a chance of getting news from the outer world. The ground began to rise at the vley right up to Pretoria Kop, and all the slope was covered with fresh, good grass for the oxen and horses. Just above the water stood a fine mimosa,

the largest tree for miles round, and under its shade we drew up the waggons parallel with one another, and facing the footpath. On the left, and at the back of the waggons, was a small thicket of thorn bushes, entwined with creepers; and out of this, beginning at the side of the waggon, we cut out a square space, throwing the creepers into the sides left standing, and thus forming an impenetrable barricade. From the top of the waggon to the far side of this space we stretched a long canvas sail, thus making a secure stable, large enough for a dozen horses. Along the wheels we constructed mangers with sacks split open and supported on forked sticks. Adjoining the stable and yard, and along the side of the trek-tow, which it is *comme il faut* to have laid out at full length in a straight line with the dusselboom, so as to be ready for use at a moment's notice, we marked out an irregular circle, about twenty-five yards in diameter. Inside this space we felled all the thorns, trees, and prickly creepers; and round the boundary proceeded to build up a strong thick high wall of branches and logs to form a krall for the oxen, which no lion or other beast of prey could break through or jump over. By the foot of our tree we constructed a rough table, by nailing the lid of a large box upon four upright posts, and with the same materials put benches round it. Between the two waggons there was space enough to hang up the tent, which afforded shelter from the sun during the day, and from the dew at night. An enormous stack of fire-wood completed our arrangements, and we were then ready to give our undivided attention to the game.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Hunting Big Game—Imparla—A Stampede—Quagga—Blue
Wildebeeste—Water-holes—Lions—Story of the Lion-killer
—Guinea-fowl—Inconyama.

FOR hunting purposes we divided our forces into two parties. Mr. White and myself, and Woodward and A. paired off together. By this means we were able to cover more ground and also ran less chance of spoiling each other's sport. As far as the bag goes, I believe that one man has a better chance of making a good one than two combined; but best of all is one white man and a single Kaffir upon whom he can thoroughly depend. One man, alone and unattended, lays himself open to additional dangers. His horse may fall and break one of his limbs, or he may be injured by the branches or trunk of a tree as he gallops along. When his rifle is empty he is at the mercy of any wounded animal, and might lose his life in a case where a second rifle would have removed all danger. The first day we hunted, Mr. White and I set off, soon after the sun was risen, in the direction of the Long Kop. For several miles we had very easy riding up and down low ridges where the grass had only very recently been burnt off, and with very few trees or bushes growing on them; but as we neared the kop, riding became more

difficult, as the bush became thicker and the ground more broken. While crossing a broad dry vley two large pigs sprung up out of the thick reeds, and emerged on the other side. I was off my horse in an instant and preparing to shoot; but my companion forbade me, as the report would drive any other and better game away, and assured me pigs were to be found without difficulty at any time. The two porkers did not seem at all inclined to hurry themselves on our account, and after standing still for some moments watching us, and grunting their indignation at our intrusion, they quietly strolled up the hill-side, with tails a foot long straight on end above their backs, and long curling white tusks, which looked very formidable weapons of defence or offence, as the case might be.

Following along the other side of the vley, we came to a pool containing a little stagnant water, and leading to it was a well-trodden game-path, covered with fresh spoor of quagga and blue wildebeeste, imparla, and other bôk. We got off our horses, and carefully examined the ground all round, in hopes of finding buffalo spoor, but to our disappointment there was not a sign of it.

In the soft mud round the edges of the pool I noticed a very large print, the size of a small plate, and on pointing it out to Mr. White he at once recognized it as a lion, and a good-sized one too. The marks were so fresh that the moisture had not yet oozed into the deeper indents, which showed the king of animals was not very far distant, and we set out in hopes of coming across him.

Finding nothing in the bed of the vley, we turned our horses up the side of the hill. Before we had gone many yards a fine troop of imparla, or red bôk trotted past, almost within pistol-shot. The imparla are the most graceful of all the bôks frequenting the bush. They are of a deep red colour, and rather larger than roe-deer, resembling them very much also in make and habits. I was again anxious to have a shot at them, for they afforded a very easy chance, sometimes halting altogether and watching our movements; but I was again restrained from the same prudential motives as before, and they were left unharmed for another day. We now proceeded for a long distance, through thick thorns and tall grass, without coming across any more game; but whenever the earth was visible, it was covered with recent spoor of quagga and blue wildebeeste. My regrets at having despised the pigs and imparla were every moment becoming more poignant, but my companion only laughed at my suggestion that we should turn back and find them before it was too late, and so I had to curb my impatience and trust to his superior knowledge and experience.

I was not in doubt about the wisdom of his advice for very long. As the top of the hill was reached, we both simultaneously perceived a number of large black objects moving slowly backwards and forwards on the side of the opposite hill, upon a broad patch of yellow unburnt grass. Almost instinctively we drew back into the shade, before these animals, whatever they were, had a chance of observing us.

To my excited vision they looked too large to be anything else than buffaloes, but my companion at once correctly put them down to be blue wildebeeste. Throwing the reins over the horses' heads, we dismounted, and cautiously forced our way towards them through the long grass, taking advantage of the thick bush to keep ourselves completely hidden from their view. We advanced thus some two or three hundred yards without venturing to expose ourselves sufficiently to obtain another sight, but suddenly were called to a halt by seeing a troop of quagga in a direct line between us and the blue wildebeeste, and which had until now been concealed by a dip in the ground. This was extremely embarrassing, for we could not proceed a yard further without attracting their attention, and we had no desire to interfere with them when blue wildebeeste were so near at hand. The quagga were already suspicious of danger, although not aware of the quarter from which to expect it, and were pawing the ground, uttering loud cries like a donkey braying, and generally evincing signs of uneasiness. While we were crouching motionless as statues and hesitating what plan to pursue, my companion had his attention arrested by a cloud of dust at the lower end of the valley we were now in.

This cloud gradually increased in volume, and at the same time approached nearer and nearer, coming in a direct line to where we lay concealed. It needed no telling for me to know that it was only an enormous mass of game trekking quickly up the valley that could raise such a huge cloud. My

excitement was increased by Mr. White whispering through his clenched teeth the magic word "buffaloes." All we had to do was to remain still, and the troop must come straight on to us. I pushed back my sight to point-blank range, took an extra cartridge in my left hand, and felt that a dozen more were standing loosely, right end upwards, in my pouch, and then waited for their appearance, feeling very much as if it was a charge of cavalry we were going to meet, but prepared for every emergency. I took a last glance in the direction of the horses, so as to make sure of the quickest way back to them; for as they were not yet accustomed to the large game, it was more than probable that a sudden alarm might seize them, and that they would join in the stampede. Soon the sound of many scudding feet came to us, and then the tall grass in front was dashed asunder, and, to our intense disgust and disappointment, the vanguard of an enormous troop of quagga, numbering many hundreds, burst upon us. Mr. White seized my arm and prevented my putting a bullet into one of the foremost, which stood stock still, too astonished, for an instant, at our unexpected presence, to turn aside. "There may be still buffalo behind," said Mr. White, which showed me how precipitate I had been. Line after line of quagga passed by, only turning aside sufficiently to avoid upsetting us, but at their tail, instead of buffalo, appeared a troop of the wildebeeste. It was now evident that there were no buffalo; so, not to miss such a fine opportunity, we both picked out a bök and fired. Mr. W. laid his low with a bullet through

the heart; but to my intense mortification the bôk I had aimed at went on to all appearances untouched and at redoubled speed, but instead of keeping with the rest of the herd, which at the report turned off over the hill, it kept straight up the valley. I did not wait to get another shot at the others; but made for my horse, which luckily had remained where it had been left.

The wildebeeste I had fired at was now on the open space where the first herd had originally been, and as it made up the side of the hill I perceived it was limping badly. Putting in the spurs, I was very soon almost alongside. I jumped off my horse, but the bôk was covered by the bush before I could fire, so I had to remount. Soon, however, the pace told on it, and I saw that the fore-leg was broken below the shoulder. Beyond the next bush that intervened the bôk lay down, and leaving my horse I was able to creep up close and give it another bullet. Taking the tail as a trophy, I rode back to where I had left my companion; but a shot in the distance told me that he had followed the herd, so I lost no time in doing likewise. It was easy work spooring them, as the grass was beaten down into a broad path, but the bush was too thick for fast riding. I was not long in coming across a small troop of quagga which had separated from the main body. They did not wait to give me a shot, but set off in a straight line for the hill which we had put down as the border of the tsetse fly. I followed them on horseback as long as I dared, and then, leaving my horse on the top of a mound, kept up the pursuit on foot. The

quagga soon pulled up when they heard the sounds of my horse's hoofs cease, and, crawling through the grass, I had a fair shot at the nearest of the herd. It gave one bound forward as the bullet struck it and then fell over quite dead, while the others dashed off and never stopped again until they were far inside the regions of the fly, for I caught sight of them galloping up a bare spot on the opposite hill, which was two miles or more from where I stood. It took me a long time to retrace my steps to where I had left my horse, for the bushes and stones all looked exactly alike, and my own spoor was too faint to afford any assistance. Before I succeeded in finding it, Mr. W. returned from pursuing the large herd in search of me, and when he had come to my answering cooe, lent me his assistance, or I might have vainly hunted about for hours. He had also been successful, and had laid low another blue wildebeeste. The sun now showed us that noon was passed by two or three hours, so we determined to make our way back to camp to give the boys time before dark to bring in the skins and best meat of our game. The horses were panting for water, so we followed down the course of a dry slood which we knew crossed the pathway from Delagoa Bay, on the chance of coming across a waterhole not yet empty.

The neighbourhood of water is always a likely spot for game, for, besides the attraction of the water itself, there is no more favourite cover during the daytime than the thick tall reeds, and a sharp sword-grass, which is sure to abound wherever the soil contains a particle of moisture.

But it is like looking for a needle in a whole stack of hay to attempt to ride or walk up game in such a spot, and the only means of dislodging it is with a pack of curs, which will run yelping in and out between the tussocks, and cover every yard of ground if left long enough. The more mongrel and cross-bred the dogs are, the more efficacious they will prove. Fighting powers or pluck are not wanted, as it is the noise and worry alone which will drive out a lion, and any bôk is too fleet of foot to run any risk from the teeth of any such dogs as can make their way through the thickets of stiff bristly grass and rushes. We rode along a hundred yards apart, skirting the edges of the reeds, and hoping to find koodoo or perhaps a swart-vitpense feeding on the luxuriant grass growing under the shade of the trees which were especially tall and fine down this valley. The swart-vitpense bôk, sable antelope, Harris bôk, or lion-hitter, as it is variously called, is the most rare, and therefore most coveted antelope in South Africa. In shape it much resembles a donkey, but, as its names imply, has a brilliant black skin, changing into white underneath the belly. Its great glory, however, lies in its horns, which curve back over its head, sometimes growing to a length of between four and five feet, and reach almost down its back. At the point they are sharp as needles, but strong and penetrating as a bayonet. These horns have given the bôk the name of lion-killer, and many are the stories of the valiant defence it has made of itself and its young from the assaults of its hereditary foe. One of the best known hunters in Africa narrated to me an

encounter he once had the good fortune to witness between a swart-vitpense and two lions combined. His attention was attracted by hearing a loud continued roaring, which he at once knew to be lions at no great distance from him. He had only a fowling-piece, so his first thought was to make himself scarce as quickly as possible. Curiosity conquered prudence, and as there were plenty of trees about he always had a way of retreat open by climbing up into the branches.

Very cautiously he made his way in the direction from which the roars proceeded, examining the bushes carefully in front of him before venturing on an open space, as the noise was now so close and so deafening that he could not tell at what moment he might come face to face with a troop of lions, and, to judge by their tones, exceedingly angry ones into the bargain. At last, on a bare space, appeared the authors of the turmoil, and, protected from view by the bushes, he was able to observe all that took place. A swart-vitpense lay crouched up in a heap, with what he recognized after a time as its young one folded in a close embrace between its fore-legs, its horns were thrown back and protecting its haunches. On either side of it stood a full-grown male lion furiously enraged, its mane almost erect, and foaming at the mouth with impatient wrath. As either one or the other crouched down to spring the bôk inclined its head so that the long deadly horns must transfix the lion in its fall. If one of them moved round in front, the bôk veered its neck in the same direction, but always contriving to keep a look-out on the other at

the sametime, and on the first sign of a spring lowering his horns, but having them up again before the other dared to make an attack. For ten minutes the same positions were maintained, neither of the lions being willing to sacrifice himself for the other's benefit ; and while thus waiting, the spectator perceived that the bôk had already repulsed one attack, for the lion farthest away from him was bleeding from a wound between the breast and shoulder. At length the pair seemed to recognize that one must be wounded if they meant to kill the bôk at all, for both crouched down ready to spring at once, one at each side. The antelope remained motionless, with his horns almost straight up in the air. Both the lions moved a few feet further in, and then crouched down again, as if collecting all their strength for a spring, and then, at the same instant, they launched themselves on their prey. For a few seconds all was one confused struggling heap, from which proceeded such fearful roars and agonizing moans as in the course of all his experience the hunter had never heard before. At last, with a convulsive struggle, the bôk rolled half over on its back, and from between its legs the young one darted out apparently unhurt, and disappeared in the bush. To the hunter's intense amazement he then perceived that the lion which had been nearest to him was transfixed on the bôk's horn, which, entering between the fore-legs, protruded just to one side of the backbone. The other lion lay alongside roaring horribly, but not attempting to touch the bôk, which was evidently at its last gasp. The excitement of the on-looker was now roused to such a pitch

that, careless of the danger, he determined to try and square accounts with the surviving lion, although he only had shot in his gun. Taking the shot out of the cartridges without destroying the cases, he wrapped round the charges two or three thicknesses of his handkerchief, and then bound it round with string, so that for some distance the shot would have the force of a bullet. Thus prepared he boldly stepped out, and advanced to within thirty yards before the lion perceived him. It appeared to have some difficulty in rising to its feet, and instead of springing forward remained where it was, but crouched down ready to spring. Although this would have been a favourable opportunity for a bullet, the hunter feared that the shot might not at that distance enter the skull, so moved slowly to one side, but never removed his eyes from the lion's gaze.

Thus he approached to within fifteen yards, and within springing distance. He dared not advance further, but levelling his gun between the beast's eyes fired, and instantly jumped aside to avoid its expected dying spring; but to his surprise and relief the lion fell over motionless. And no wonder, for the charge, penetrating like a bullet, had broken up and expanded inside the skull, and scattered the brains all over the neck.

To skin two lions and a bôk, unassisted, was beyond his power. His encampment was too far off to obtain help that night, so he emptied the powder out of several more cartridges, and exploded it in a circle round the heap of slain, forming a magic line which no jackal, lion, or other nightly prowler, would

pass over. A few branches stuck upright in the middle made it safe from vultures, and he then left his spoil till next day. The horns of this lion-killer measured four feet five inches from the tips to where they joined the skull, and were at the base eight inches in diameter.

This is the only account of an actual fight between a swart-vitpense and lions that I ever heard from an eye-witness; but it is not a very uncommon occurrence, I have been assured, to find the skeletons of the two mixed up in one heap, the only testimony left of what has, without doubt, been a duel fatal to both combatants.

The bush grew so thick as we followed down the slope, that it was only by repeatedly whistling we kept near each other. Every water-hole we passed was dryer than the preceding one, so we soon gave up the quest of water as hopeless, and turned our attention to looking for game, and getting back to camp as quickly as possible.

For some few minutes I had not heard my signal repeated, and although I rode hither and thither was unable to get any response to my cries. It did not cause me any uneasiness, however, as I knew that the sloop would bring me to the footpath if I only followed it long enough, and then I had a straight ride home. If my companion had been in any difficulty or danger, he would have fired his rifle to attract my attention, and there was no need of anxiety about him finding the way back to the waggon. I was longer than I had expected in finding the footpath, and when I did the position of the Long

Kop showed me that it was still a longish ride back ; so as the sun was low in the heavens I quickened up the pace, and arrived back in camp just as Mr. W., who had been back some time, was beginning to feel nervous about my having lost the way, and was preparing to set out again to find me.

The others had returned early in the afternoon. They had been over miles of country in the opposite direction, but had not come across quagga or blue wildebeeste, although they had seen spoor of them in abundance. Their bag consisted of a stein-bôk and a sarsapi, so at all events there was enough meat in camp to victual a small army. The sarsapi is a hybrid between the hems-bôk and the blue wildebeeste. It is the size of a red deer, and of a brownish red colour. The meat is excellent, and it has a pretty head, but the horns are not worth keeping as a trophy.

We despatched the boys at once with spare horses to bring in the meat. Nothing surprised me more than the way in which Kaffirs will find out dead game, from the very loosest description of its whereabouts, even in country quite strange to them. Often I have left a dead bôk in a place to which it would have more than puzzled me to retrace my steps ; but, nevertheless, from the vague directions I was able to give, the boys have returned in a very short space of time with the skin, meat, and horns.

The savoury odours issuing from our largest stew-pot, simmering over the fire, were not necessary to give us all the proverbial hunger. By the time I had enjoyed a wash in the larger of the two water-

holes, which we set apart for that purpose, our dinner was ready. While we had been away the boys had baked a plentiful supply of damper, and also made some very good cakes in the frying-pan. Before we dined the boys returned, laden with the carcasses of the first two wildebeeste we had shot, and they were just in time for us to put the marrow-bones in the ashes, and to let them be cooked in time to form our second course. After we had finished, and were lazily lying about, enjoying our pipes, and talking over our various adventures, the boys suddenly pointed out to us a flock of more than a hundred guinea-fowl, running almost within range, in a long line, and evidently making for the trees just beyond the camp. A. and myself snatched up our fowling-pieces, and started off at once. He ran round them to come up behind, while I ensconced myself behind a bush in their line.

The first of the line were within five yards of me, when A. came upon the rear files, and laid low a brace as they rose to fly. The whole line flew straight over my head, and I was able to knock over a brace and a half before they were out of shot. They settled in a clump of trees close by; but as we had sufficient for the time being, we did not disturb them again, as the boys, who knew their habits, assured us that they would return, night after night, to the same roosting-place, and we determined to attack them in force another night. As the large quantity of fresh meat about the waggons was sure to draw lions and other beasts from all parts round us, we made up three fires, instead of two as usual. One

we placed at the rear of the waggons, and another at either side of them, forming a triangle.

The extra precautions were not needless, for we had only just turned in when the boys first announced to us, in rather an anxious manner, that an "incon-yama" (lion) was near. A. and myself were very sceptical, as we could hear nothing unusual; but our more experienced companions at once heard it; and soon there was no room to doubt its presence, for the growling seemed to come from right under our feet.

A lion never roars, unless he is either standing at bay or wishes to strike terror into the hearts of the game he is pursuing. When prowling round of a night, or retiring to his lair of a morning, he keeps up a sound between a pig's grunt and a dog's growl, but louder than any fifty of the latter in chorus. He can be distinctly heard several miles away, and nothing is more difficult than to distinguish whether he is close by or far off. When very close the whole air seems to be filled with muttered thunder; and it was some time before I could sleep with it booming in my ears.

The horses and oxen were very uneasy, and we feared that the kraal would not prove strong enough to restrain the oxen, as they rushed backwards and forwards charging into the barricades. The drivers' voices soothed them after a time; and the second night they did not appear to mind at all, even when the lions were very much closer.

There was no necessity for us to trouble ourselves about keeping up the fires, as the boys took care that they were never allowed to grow dim.

Kaffirs have a superstition that a lion prefers a black man to a white, and will always make for the Kaffir in preference. This belief we never lost an opportunity of impressing upon them, for it proved far more efficacious in keeping them watchful and alert during the night, than any threats or promises on our part would have been. During the whole time we were in the neighbourhood of lions, it was never necessary to tell the boys to make up the fires after dusk ; and our only care was to prevent them putting on all our stock of firewood in the early part of the night, and so being left with none during the later and more dangerous part of it.

Later in the night the first lion we had heard was joined by a second, and the two prowled round and round till just before the first streak of dawn appeared above the hills, when their growls gradually became less and less distinct as they retreated down the course of the vley. The jackals and wild dogs stayed much later ; and one of the former afforded us a capital chase with the dogs when we turned out to begin the new day ; but we were not successful in running him down.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Rumours of Danger — Precautions — Sarsapi — Vultures—The Camp-pot—Delagoa Bay Boys—Boers' churlishness—A Battue—A Novel Hunt—Stalking Oxen—Pig—New Boys—Our Party breaks up—A Melancholy Sunday.

WHILE we had all been hunting the previous day, a party of boys returning to Delagoa Bay from the Pilgrims' Rest Gold Fields had passed our camp, and from them our own boys had obtained news of grave importance to the safety of our small party, namely, that the strangers had come across a large armed party of Moreeps Kaffirs, not far off, on the other side of Pretorius Kop. They also said that all were well armed, and evidently out upon some marauding expedition. As near as they could judge the numbers, there were about 500 in all.

If this statement was absolutely true, there was a great chance that an attack would be made on us; but as our only authority for such a belief was a second-hand report from a very unreliable source, we determined to stay on where we were until we received more authentic intelligence. As a precautionary measure, we resolved that for the remainder of our stay we would never all be absent from our waggons at the same time. This step answered several purposes. First, and most important, was the

fact that if any attack was made the presence of one of ourselves would encourage and greatly assist the boys to make a resistance which would, at all events, serve to keep off even a large body of Kaffirs until the firing would bring up the absent ones to the rescue. Secondly, in case of any fresh news being brought by passing boys, there would be more chance of hearing a true and less exaggerated account, and so we should be better able to judge of its importance and veracity. Lastly, the work of the camp, such as cooking our meals, curing the skins, drying the meat, cleaning the guns, &c., would be far more efficiently carried on, and there would be less risk run of either cattle or horses straying into the regions of the tsetse fly, or too far away to be readily brought back when wanted.

The first expedition under our new arrangement consisted of Mr. White, A., and myself. We took the direction of the kop, known to us by the name of Stony, as a broad belt round the base, as well as its sides, was covered closely with pieces of rock and stones, which made riding a slow process, besides being difficult and dangerous.

Soon after leaving the camp a fine sarsapi crossed an open space in front of us, but went on apparently unhurt by the volley with which we saluted it without dismounting from our horses. The thorns and reeds were here too thick to enable us to proceed faster than at a walk, so we could not follow up the bôk, and it disappeared. Half-an-hour's up-hill ride brought us to the top of an open ridge, running for a considerable distance from the side of the mountain,

and dividing one side of the plain from the other. From this elevation we took a careful survey of the surrounding country, but were unable to sight game of any kind. As we were preparing to descend the other side, a flock of vultures circling in the air, and quickly being reinforced from every quarter of the heavens, attracted our attention. Lower and lower they swooped down, and the bolder spirits settled upon the topmost branches of a decayed tree, not a quarter of a mile from where we stood. We turned our horses' heads, and galloped up to the spot. While we were approaching, one by one the vultures took wing, and circled round and round our heads, casting great shadows on the ground.

Our curiosity was rewarded, for close to the tree from which we had disturbed the loathsome birds, lay a dying sarsapi. As we rode up it made one desperate effort to rise, but fell back dead in the attempt. On examination it proved to be the one we had fired at, for one of our bullets had entered its ribs and passed through the hind leg on the other side. The poor beast had just strength to escape us in the dense bush, but would soon have furnished a meal for the vultures. We were not long in skinning the body and cutting off the best meat, which we wrapped up in the skin, and "planted" in a crevice of the rocks until our return.

Before we had moved a hundred yards away, the vultures, who had been watching our every movement, had set to work devouring the remains; and by the time we regained the top of the ridge, long lines of them, departing in every direction, showed us that

every scrap of the feast had been picked up, and not a sign of meat left on a bone.

At the foot of the hill we came upon a pool with a little water still left in; but it was too putrid and fetid for ourselves, although the horses drank it eagerly. On its edges we found the spoor of lion, quagga, blue wildebeeste, giraffe, sarsapi, and many other kinds of bôk. One lion had only just left, for the moisture was still damp in the prints of his paws by the water's edge. This fellow must have had a night of severe dissipation, as no ordinary thirst would tempt him out of his lair in the broiling sun and glaring light.

Following down the dry bed of the stream for some distance, we came to a broad tract of lately burnt grass, on which the green shoots were springing up. On the far side of this, underneath the shade of some unusually large trees, we sighted a fine lot of blue wildebeeste and quagga. As the country was open on all sides we were in doubt as to what means we should use to get within shot. Our deliberations, however, were soon put to an end. From almost under our feet out started a reed-bôk, with a dash and crash through the brittle thorns and twigs, which instantly attracted the attention of the herd of wildebeeste.

Off they started in two long lines at their clumsy awkward sort of trot, which looks slow but will try the metal of even a good horse to keep up with. I stopped an instant to take a vindictive but unsuccessful shot at the reed-bok which had betrayed our presence, but the other two lost no time in pursuing

the nearest line of the flying bôk. Seeing that they were making for the end of the valley, where some boggy ground would force them to turn to the left, I made my way as fast as the nature of the ground would allow me straight across the opposite ridge, and then down its length, so as to cut them off. When I had reached the spot I calculated they would have to pass, I dismounted, tied my horse behind a clump of bush, and, concealing myself, waited their approach. Several shots from the others told me that the herd were coming in my direction, and presently the leader came, trotting quite leisurely over the open space in front of me, and closely followed by a long line. I picked out the fellow with the best horns, for they were not more than fifty yards from me, got a fine sight, and fired. I did not wait to see if I had killed, but loaded again at once. The smoke, however, hung so long that all the bôk had disappeared before I could get another shot. Within twenty yards of where I had fired at him lay my bôk, quite dead.

The other two, I concluded, must have followed another part of the herd, for I could see no traces of them when I remounted, with my spoils behind the saddle.

As the sun was getting low, and I was not very certain of my way back, I made for the top of the nearest eminence, and from there was able to pick out my return road to Stony Kop. Once at the foot of that, I could make our camp to within a few hundred yards by several prominent, and now, to us all, well-known landmarks. The other two had already

returned when I arrived, and had also been successful. A. had shot two quagga, the meat of which the boys prefer to any other game; and Mr. White had laid low another blue wildebeeste.

Woodward had devoted his attention during our absence to preparing a capital dinner, from our well-stocked larder. We kept the coffee-pot in constant requisition, for none of us had drunk since the early morning, and twelve hours in the heat of a South African sun makes a man feel that a river will hardly suffice to quench his thirst. The best food we found by experience, after a long day's work, was very thick glutinous soup, which really consisted of the very essence of the meat.

A large pot was constantly kept over a slow fire. Into this we continually placed large strips of fresh meat, potatoes, rice, salt, pepper, and various game birds to give it flavour. The slices of meat were taken out every few hours and fresh ones put in, and at the same time the pot was filled up with water. The boys would eat the meat which was removed, but all its strength remained in the soup, which became so thick that a spoon would almost stand up in it. Sometimes we were all too tired to eat solid meat, but yet were able to take any quantity of the liquid essence, which was more easily eaten, and probably more restorative, than the actual meat.

Next day I remained behind in charge of the camp, and devoted the time to thoroughly cleaning and oiling all the spare guns, looking over the stores, making a fresh supply of belton, seeing that the skins of the animals we had killed were properly

stretched out to dry, and many other small matters round and about the waggons, which we had neglected for the hunting. During the day a party of about thirty boys appeared, who were on their way home to Delagoa Bay from the Diamond Fields. They were almost starved, and literally danced and sung with delight when I told them that they might have almost the whole of a blue wildebeeste, which would only have gone bad if we had kept it. Jantze did not at all approve of what he considered my quite uncalled-for liberality. He first wished me to make them buy it from me ; but when he found that I was determined to lose the chance of turning an honest penny, he made up his mind to do a deal on his own account. I noticed that he was taking a great deal of most unusual trouble in cutting up the meat into portions for each one of the Delagoa Bay boys, and on approaching nearer I discovered that each one was paying him some small coin before receiving his allowance. I very soon stopped his trading, however, and, to his intense disappointment and annoyance, made him refund all the money he had already received, amounting in all to some eight or nine shillings. Jantze was only following out the system he had seen pursued by the Boers, and from which he had himself suffered on more than one occasion.

While we were on our road to the Berg, and had run short of meat, we one day came upon a party of Boers who had that day killed four eland, and had the carcasses strewed round their waggon, and having in all some two tons of meat.

We naturally asked them to give us enough for

our party, with every intention of giving them powder, caps, sugar, coffee, or whatever they might be short of, in exchange; but to our intense disgust the miserly cur replied, "That we might have as much as ever we liked at sixpence a pound, that being the price of the best meat in the towns."

Although it was in a degree cutting off our nose to spite our face, we would not let the Boer have the satisfaction of making anything out of us, and allowed the pleasing vision of smoking eland steaks, and savoury stew, to fade away, rather than let him boast of having "done" the "verdomed Englishers."

I was glad of the chance of making friends with these boys, in the hope of inducing some of them to stay with us. We were so shorthanded that at present any expedition into the fly, which entailed having boys to carry stores, was out of the question. If, therefore, I could have induced these boys, either to stay themselves, or send us others from some kraals only about seventy miles away, on the banks of the Crocodile, we could have started off, without further waiting for the boys who had been promised to us. The boys themselves would not stay, although I held out heavy inducements, in the shape of unlimited quantities of meat to eat, and presents to each of blankets, beads, knives, or whatever they might fancy, at the end of their time. They gave us for their reason that they had already been away from their kraals for more than a year, and were very anxious to get back to their wives and families. They had also come such a long weary tramp from the Diamond Fields, that they were not up to the

fatigue of a hunting excursion. However, they made the most earnest promises that they would send back boys from the very next kraal they came to—which promises like most other pledges by the ordinary Kaffir, were probably never thought of again when they were once out of sight. These boys had no fresh news of any importance. They had heard that Cetchwayo had been attacked, and that war had been declared, but this we gave no importance to, as the same had been reported regularly four or five times a month for the last half-year. Even if it were true, it would have affected us but little, as the friendly Amaswazi were between us and Zululand; and the smaller chiefs around us would not pluck up courage to harm us until they were assured that the Zulus had a chance of success. Naturally to an Englishman, it seems absurd that a Kaffir should have the presumption to even doubt about the ultimate result of any hostilities between a Kaffir chief and the English nation. But to the Kaffir, and to the Boers also in a less degree, the might of Britain is only so much moonshine. They are quite ready to admit that the regiments in the country are most dangerous enemies, and will perform prodigies of valour, and will undergo any dangers and successfully overcome enormous odds; and they possibly even over-estimate what these men who are present before their eyes are capable of; but beyond what they see they do not believe. I have often seen, first an expression of mild incredulity, and finally one of scornful disbelief, overspread the countenance of a Boer when I have tried to explain to him how utterly

futile any attempt would be to gain anything from our Government by force of arms. The unlimited men, arms, and money that England could and would bring against rebellion, whether of Boers or Kaffirs, they regard as mere scare-crows, and do not hesitate to so express themselves.

The Boer will always bring up the same question as his argument. "If, as you say, England is so mighty, and has such vast power, why is it that you cannot conquer Secocoeni, who has been at open warfare, in the heart of the country you annexed with the express purpose of protecting and keeping in order? Why, also, did it take you so long to put down the risings in the south?" Occasionally, too, a Boer will ask "Why, if you are so great, did you ally yourselves with Cetchwayo when you took our country from us, and hold over us threats, not that your troops would compel us to submit, but that Cetchwayo's regiments should be let loose on our land." Whether there is any truth in the latter supposition or not, I do not know, but the impression is so deeply rooted in the Boers' minds that it will never be entirely eradicated.

An hour before sunset the hunters returned with a quagga, a blue wildebeeste, and a klip-springer.

In the evening we again attacked the guinea fowl, with great slaughter. The boys had marked a long line of them going up to roost in the same clump of trees that we had before killed them in. After our dinner, and just as the sun went down, we surrounded the clump of some half-dozen trees, the boughs of which we could see were crowded with the birds. As

we wanted a quantity, and were essentially shooting for the pot, we did not disdain the poaching plan of having our first shots at them as they sat all huddled up together. We fired almost simultaneously, and never shall I forget the noise which arose. There must have been several hundred of the birds; and as they rose, the flapping and screaming of the unhurt, but terrified portion, added to the crashing through the thick branches of the bodies of the ignobly slain, and cries and flutterings of the wounded, made a far more confusing and exciting battue than any pheasants at the hottest corner of the keeper's coppice ever afforded.

For over a minute we fired as quickly as we could load, before the whole flock had flown off. It was too dark to find all the dead birds, for many had fallen into the thick and prickly thorns, and many more had lodged in the lower branches of the trees; but we took back with us to camp as many as we could carry, and left the remainder for the boys to gather and bring in next day. Guinea fowls, salted, and dried in the sun, make most excellent beltong; and when grilled, or even uncooked, form a very relishing change from the never-varying *menu* of bôk or mealie pap.

During the next week or so we hunted the country round our camp for many miles on either side; but although we rarely failed to come across and kill blue wildebeeste, also many other kinds of the smaller bôk, including sarsapi, reed-bôk, and stein-bôk, we could never find any signs of buffalo, giraffe, or rhinoceros; and it at last became evident to us that

none of the big game had yet left the regions of the tsetse fly, to seek the young fresh grass along the base of the Berg, where our present hunting-grounds were situated.

One day, while out after game, I witnessed a very novel hunting scene. From the top of a ridge I saw a large troop of blue wildebeeste rapidly making their way down the side of an opposite rise towards the end of the ridge I was on. I hurried down to get a shot as they passed. The quagga came first, dashing along so fast that I thought some hunter must be pursuing them, and I took shelter behind a rock, lest a stray bullet might reach me. Close behind the quagga were the blue wildebeeste, evidently hard pressed; but still I could see no one after them. What was my surprise, however, when, following on their heels, came a huge troop of hideously ugly, vicious-looking baboons, jumping, jabbering, waving their arms, and evidently greatly enjoying the sport. I could hardly believe my eyes at first, but the whole troop passed within a hundred yards of me. I had let the blue wildebeeste pass out of shot while I looked on at the baboons; and not caring to bring the devilish-looking beasts all after me, I let them pass on too, without molesting them. There must have been nearly a thousand of them, many as large as a boy, and far stronger.

One morning, just as we were starting off for the day, we were met by a party of four white men on horseback, who were at once recognized as three officers of the 13th Regiment, quartered at Leydenburg, and a well-known farmer from the same

neighbourhood. We went back to the waggons together, and over a bottle of square face exchanged our different news and hunting adventures.

The new arrivals informed us their camp was only some five miles to the south of ours, and that they were on the way back to Leydenburg, as their leave had expired. They intended pushing on with the waggons next day as far as possible, and then riding in the remainder of the distance. By these means they obtained the very utmost time possible for hunting, and were not obliged to waste any on the slow process of ox trekking.

For the sake of company more than of sport we all set off together, taking the direction of the Long Kop, which we regarded as a sure ground for wildebeeste. They had found our camp in a rather disappointing manner to themselves. One of the boys, who had been viewing the country from the high ground, came into their camp with the news that a herd of buffalo were feeding in a valley close by. Off the whole party started at once, and were not long in sighting their game. They made a long *détour* round, so as to have the wind in their faces, and then cautiously approaching the "bront" on which the buffalo were feeding. Bush hid them until they were nearly within shot, and then they dismounted, and stalked the herd. But what was their disgust when they came within shot to find that, instead of buffalo, they had wasted all their time on our span of black bullocks, which in the distance much resembled the nobler species!

While trotting quietly along the side of a dry slood, out from the reeds at the side bustled a herd of some

twenty pigs. They scattered in all directions, and we did the same ; so in a very few moments all were separated, and the cracks of the rifles on every side made me expect every instant to have a bullet in unpleasantly close proximity to myself or horse. The pig I was pursuing very soon gave me the slip in some long grass, so I turned my horse's head, and proceeded in the same direction we were taking before the porkers appeared. I was soon overtaken by two of the others, one of whom had been successful in slaying a fine boar, with tusks ten inches long, but so firmly fixed in that no amount of cutting could extract them ; and as the wild pigs are all of them coated with vermin, he preferred leaving behind the trophies of his skill to carrying the whole head along with him. As the entire country had now been disturbed, it was of no use expecting to find any other game about, so we made our way to their camp, and presently the rest of the party joined us there, and we had a capital dinner off a calf wildebeeste, shot a day or two previously, which had acquired the gamey flavour of venison.

With their waggons were some twenty boys, who had come out for the sake of the supplies of meat they were allowed to take home in consideration of their services as hewers of wood, drawers of water, and making themselves of general utility. As these were no longer wanted, we were only too glad to take the whole of them off their hands, for we were assured that they were excellent boys, and thoroughly acquainted with all the details of hunting life.

When I reached our own camp, I found that Mr.

White and A. were engaged in discussing the advisability of taking the opportunity of travelling in company, and so being able to bid defiance to any chance party of marauding Kaffirs they might encounter on the road back to Leydenburg; and they finally made up their minds to join the homeward-bound party next day; and much as we mutually regretted parting, there could be no two opinions as to the wisdom of their decision, considering the very unsettled state of the country, the reports of hostile Kaffirs being in the neighbourhood, and the small party they would otherwise form, although it cut short the time they might otherwise have stayed by some ten days or a fortnight.

A. was going back home to Scotland without any delay whatever; Mr. White had business in Natal which needed his immediate attention.

It was a very late hour before we turned in, for there were many incidents of our past life together that we talked over again, and many messages to be taken back for anxious friends and relatives in the old country.

Next day happened to be Sunday, and a very melancholy day it was for me. When I had said the last Good-bye, and seen the figures of my departing friends disappear round a clump of mimosa, I wished very keenly for a time that I too was on my way back home.

Later on in the day the new boys arrived, sent back from their last masters, and very soon were on the best of terms with those who had been with us from the beginning.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Into the Tsetse Belt—Zulus—Moreep—Preparations for the Start
—Giraffe—An exciting Run—Marrow Bones—Jacob—
Stores for the Journey—Last Instructions—A parting Salute
—Kaffir Laziness—A Boa-Constrictor.

EVER since we had ascertained that the big game had not yet come out of the fly district, Woodward and I had been discussing a scheme for going after them into their securest haunts, as they would not come to us. Now that the other two were departed, and we had only ourselves to consider, one of the chief objections to our contemplated journey was removed in the fact that we should not now be in any way breaking up our party, for we had known that the limited time Mr. White had at his disposal would have prevented him going. Another obstacle had been the deficiency of boys to accompany us, as bearers of provisions and hunters; but with our recent reinforcement we had an abundant supply at our service.

Later in the day four more boys, on their road to Delagoa Bay came up, and hearing from our boys of the proposed expedition, they petitioned to be allowed to join in consideration of the unlimited indulgence in "skof" (meat) they were sure to enjoy.

We now had enough boys to go with us, and yet leave a sufficient number to take care of the waggons,

oxen, and horses, and to protect them against any pilfering by stray Kaffirs on their way either to or from the Fields.

Our drivers and foreloupers had already given us so many proofs of their fidelity and honesty, that we felt no doubts at all as to their being tempted by our absence to steal liquor, powder, caps, lead, or any other articles, which become almost priceless marketable valuables in such a far-away country as we were in ; and we were just as confident that they would allow no strangers to do so. The mere fact of our boys being pure-bred Zulus was almost a sufficient guarantee of their behaving as well, or probably better, when left on their honour in charge of our possessions, as they would when we were present to personally keep them to their duties. If a man is lucky enough to get pure Zulus as his servants, he is freed from many of the minor annoyances and inconveniences of South African Life. The ordinary Kaffir, whether he be Basuto, Macatee, or any of the other numerous tribes inhabiting those parts, is always on the look-out to steal. He is utterly untrustworthy, and unreliable. He does not know what it means to tell the truth ; and looks upon his master's absence as a godsend thrown in his way, in which he may steal, eat, drink, and be lazy, to his heart's content, without any fear of immediate retribution. He is quick to a degree in taking advantage of any ignorance or soft-heartedness on his master's part, and will always desert him in the hour of need or danger. A Zulu, on the other hand, is almost invariably an honest, truthful, and reliable

servant. He will always stand by his master if an occasion comes for blows and hard knocks, neither will he ever run away and leave him in the hour of sickness and helplessness. On the other hand, a Zulu has, with very good reason, a far higher opinion of himself than of his fellow-blacks, and is much more likely to forcibly resent any chastisement or ill-treatment, unless well deserved, in which case he will suffer his punishment in silence, be none the worse servant for it, and certainly bear no malice against his master. Zulus are, as a rule, far finer men physically, as well as morally, than any other Kaffirs, and will do double the work, and bear twice the hardship, without complaining. During the whole of my stay in South Africa I never heard the fact even called in question, that Zulus are in every capacity by far the most superior race of South Africa; and all my own personal experience pointed the same way.

Notwithstanding the reliance we were happily able to place in the boys we contemplated leaving in charge of our camp, we could not shut our eyes to the risks we ran in leaving it ourselves. The whole country was so unsettled, and so many rumours of wars were flying about, that at any moment the final crash might come, and either the Zulus break out themselves or have hostilities thrust upon them. The instant this happened all the petty chiefs would take the opportunity of sending out impeys in every direction, who, under the pretence of being Zulus, would scour the whole country, and rob, plunder, and murder, wherever they saw their chance of falling

upon an unprotected homestead or upon a party of waggons trekking.

In the fastnesses of the hills, within a day's journey of where we were encamped, lay the kraal of Moreep, a relative of Secocoeni, a chief of a small tribe, an off-shoot of the Amaswazis. This chief we knew to be very evilly disposed towards the English, and to be only awaiting any decided and sufficiently powerful movement against the troops to openly range himself on the side of Secocoeni.

Our presence in the valley had of course been made known to this rascal by his scouts almost before we had ourselves arrived there, and he was equally sure to possess pretty accurate descriptions of our numbers and strength, as well as of the quantity of cattle, oxen, stores, and ammunition we had in our possession. Although a petty chief, he could easily muster some thousand men, all of whom would be fairly well armed, and most of them with fire-arms. Now, if while we were away after the big game, any very reassuring reports of British reverses or Kaffir successes were brought to this chief, or if reported negotiations between him and Secocoeni were concluded, there was not much doubt but that he would think it a glorious opportunity of refilling his magazine with ammunition, acquiring a fine addition to his herds of cattle, and providing himself, not only with horses and rifles, but also many such luxuries as spirits, coffee, meal, &c., by sending down an impey to attack our camp. If we were there ourselves to defend it, the boys, encouraged by our presence, would prove most formidable antagonists ; and with

our superior arms, unlimited ammunition, and advantageous position, we might fairly hope to inflict such severe slaughter upon the attackers that they would give it up as not being worth the candle, and so we might save our possessions. Supposing, however, that while we were away (the mere fact of which being reported to Moreep would make him all the more inclined to indulge his plundering propensities), an armed force was to attack the camp, we could not even expect the six boys left in charge to attempt any defence, and indeed they would be fools to think of it in the face of such odds. Our boys would take to their heels on the first sign of the enemy, and we should never again see a vestige of our belongings, and not even have the satisfaction of making them pay dearly for them. This was the most serious risk we ran in making any long stay away from the waggons, and we could not calculate on being absent less than a fortnight at our lowest estimate, supposing everything indeed went well, and we came upon game upon the road we intended pursuing, without spending any time in searching for it. We were also slightly nervous about our boys keeping up their vigilance in preventing the cattle straying too near the borders of the fly. Our only other fear was lest a sudden fire should sweep over the country and drive the cattle before it, scattering them abroad, or else destroy the waggons themselves. This last apprehension was very soon removed, for while we were in the afternoon discussing the pros and cons we perceived a fire coming towards us, but so slowly, owing to the scantiness of

grass, that we had plenty of time to secure ourselves against any inconvenient amount of heat by firing ourselves for some distance all round about, and so leaving nothing for it to approach us by; but it swept all the surrounding country bare for many miles round.

Before the evening of the day on which we were left alone we had quite made up our minds to run what risks there might be, and start off after the big game as soon as we could get our stores together. We lost no time when we had once made up our minds, as every day was of importance, both as bringing nearer the likelihood of Kaffir risings, and also of the unhealthy season coming on before we could get out of the low-lying, and therefore fever-stricken, country. All the next day we spent in deciding upon what things were absolutely necessary for us to take, and in apportioning all that we found needful into ten equal loads. In the afternoon, while we were still busy, some of the boys whom we had sent out to look round for game, came running back to camp with the intelligence that they had come across a herd of seven kameel leopards, as the giraffe are invariably called by Boers and Kaffirs. In far less time than it takes to write, Woodward and myself had thrown down whatever work we were engaged upon, had seized our rifles and ammunition-belts, which were never far from our hands, and were following the boys as quickly as the thick bush they led us through would permit. For two or three miles we proceeded at a jog-trot, which at last began to tell upon our wind, and as I gathered that we were

somewhere in the vicinity of the giraffe I insisted on pulling up for a few moments to recover my coolness, as nothing so unsteadies the hand and eye as too rapid travelling over the ground; and many an animal has been missed, many an accident occurred, and occasionally a life been lost, solely through a hunter being too hot, and having his nerves all throbbing from exertion, to such an extent that he could not hold his rifle steady when it came to the point. While halted we had time to hear from the boys that the kameel were moving slowly along when they saw them, and that by the direction we had taken they expected to cut them off before they reached a clump of short green thorn, towards which the boys' instinct told them they were making. They had miscalculated the distance and time however, for on nearing the clump we suddenly perceived the tall heads of the herd, moving about exactly like huge serpents, right above the tops of the highest thorn bushes. The same instant that we sighted them, they perceived us; and twisting and turning their long necks from side to side in and out of the branches, they proceeded at an apparently leisurely trot towards a thickly wooded ridge to the right. By running as fast as I could put one leg before the other, and utterly regardless of tearing thorns and slashing branches, I managed to come up within a hundred yards of the hindmost of the herd just as it was disappearing within the thick cover, where it would have been hopeless to follow them. Falling on one knee I took a hurried aim, and fired, hardly even expecting to hit; but to my

great delight the tall head fell forward, then down almost between the forelegs, and the giraffe toppled over on to its side, quite dead, with my bullet through its head. It was a very lucky fluke, as I had aimed at the shoulder. On looking at my rifle I found the sight had slipped up to 400 yards, which accounted for the elevation. The giraffe was only three-quarters grown, and not nearly as fine as several which escaped; but still we were quite content with our spoil, as we returned to camp with the skin and marrow-bones. The skin of a full-sized giraffe will weigh considerably over one hundredweight, and the hide is worth from 2*l.* to 4*l.*, according to its size, weight, and the manner in which it has been dressed. Its enormous length makes it extremely useful for whip-thongs; from its thickness, toughness, and durability it makes the very best sole-leather that can be procured. The marrow-bones are splendid eating. The marrow is more consistent and meat-like than in any other animal, and one leg gives a dinner for even a big man, as there is over a yard. The flesh of the giraffe is seldom eaten by whites, but the Kaffirs do not object to it when there is no other. In appearance it reminded me of a bad-conditioned salmon, for it had much the same pinky-red colour, and had streaks which divided it into flakes just like the fish. It was a lucky shot in a way that I did not discover until afterwards, for during the evening we heard the boys talking very excitedly to each other; and upon W. approaching and joining in, he discovered that they were all talking with amazement of what they considered my marvellous

display of skill ; for Jantze the driver, and Jacob my especial boy, both insisted that I had aimed at the head, and that I could hit anything at any distance just where I chose—which impressed the new boys so thoroughly, that they ever after gave me credit for superhuman prowess with the rifle.

Jacob was one of the new boys, whom I had taken as my own particular body-servant, and whose duty was never to leave me under any circumstances, to carry my spare gun, and always accompany me hunting. He was a perfect specimen of the *genus homo*. Two-and-twenty years old, over six feet in height, and with arms and legs which would satisfy a sculptor, he had a fine, open, and even handsome, face, he was strong as a horse, and agile as a panther. Even when I was riding along at a gallop he would keep up, either in front of me to lead the way, or close behind when I wished him to follow ; and at the end of a long day's work he would be as fresh as at starting, although he had been carrying a heavy gun, ammunition, and assegais, the whole time.

We felt the heat more trying during the night than we had hitherto experienced it. Until the stars were about to disappear we sat outside upon the waggons, with nothing on but our shirts, exposed to the little air there was, and even in that light attire were uncomfortably warm and close. Before we turned in, we again went over all the articles we had decided on taking, and saw that they were in their respective places and divisions, and that each boy knew his proper package. As we had plenty of

boys to carry, there was no reason for us to leave anything behind which would materially affect our comfort, so we were rather luxurious in our supplies of provisions, and also took more bedding than was absolutely needful. Our ten packages were made up as follows: The first boy had the most bulky burden, containing our blankets, wrapped up in a small tent, seven feet long by three feet high, which, when tied between two branches, racks, sticks, or anything handy, and with its sides pegged out, just afforded cover for two men lying at full length underneath it. This I insisted on taking, rather against Woodward's wishes, so that in case of rain we might have shelter both for our guns and ourselves, if we did happen to be so unfortunate in our weather as to have wet. As a general rule it was more pleasant to sleep without any covering at all, except the boughs of a tree overhead, which quite efficiently kept off the little dew that ever fell. Number two was our sapper and miner as well as scullion, and carried a hatchet, spade, bucket, frying-pan, and a couple of billies. Numbers three and four were loaded with six pots of preserved milk, coffee, sugar, and rice, a bottle of square-face, two cups, two plates, two knives and forks, salt and pepper, and a small bag of preserved peaches. The latter are an almost indispensable article of diet, for without any vegetable at all, one is apt to get out of health from the large quantity of meat, which of course forms the sole sustenance. Numbers five and six carried about twenty pounds of mealie meal apiece; this we intended more for the boys' food than

our own, in case of not killing any meat our first day out. Numbers seven and eight had the same weight apiece of crushed mealies for my horse, as the probabilities were that we should come upon no grass for several days that it could eat. Number nine had the most important load of all—our supply of cartridges, powder, and other shooting gear. Number ten carried two large water-gourds, which when we had opportunity were filled; but as we seldom were able to keep them long full, he assisted number nine with the ammunition, which, from its heavy weight in a small compass, proved the most wearisome and difficult to carry of all the different packages. Jacob had only my field-glasses, a large supply of matches, my spare rifle, and some tobacco to carry, as he might be wanted at any time to leave the trek and accompany me after game.

Two boys were also left out of the reckoning, who could give a hand to any of the others who grew tired, take the place of any one who might fall sick, and be ready for any odd jobs which might crop up. I had decided to take one horse into the fly with me, but I should not have felt at all easy in my mind about conveying it to a certain and painful death, if it had not happened that the horse had already been taken in by accident and the mischief done, so it made very little difference what became of it, as nothing could save its life.

The sun next morning rose upon us already up and making ready for our start. As soon as we had finished a hearty breakfast, at which we indulged plentifully in jam and biscuits, as we should not have

the chance of eating them again for some time ; we saw each boy take up his right bundle, and then under charge of Woodward they all started off in file. I stayed behind with Jacob, to see if they had forgotten anything, or if anything more struck me as necessary when a clearance was made, and if there was, to bring it on afterwards with us, and also to give Jantze and the other boys who were left behind their final instructions. They none of them at all liked being, as they thought, deserted, and were full of the most gloomy apprehensions of the dangers likely to beset them. They repeatedly asked when we should be back, and begged that we would not be any longer than the fourteen days we told them we should probably be absent from the waggon. They all promised to attend constantly to the oxen and horses, and not ever allow them out of their sight long enough to enter the fly, or be carried off by Kaffirs. I held out as a bribe some present such as a belt or blanket for each boy left behind, if when we returned all was well, and they had behaved properly.

I had a thorough search throughout the camp, but found nothing which we had forgotten to put in the sacks, and after repeating all the instructions and directions for the last time to the drivers who were left in command, I mounted my horse and rode off, with Jacob leading the way on the trek of Woodward and the rest of the party. As I disappeared over the hill-side, the boys gave me a parting shout, and one or two of them fired off their guns as a farewell salute. It was a waste of powder which I did not

much approve of, but as I daresay it helped to revive their spirits, it was not thrown away entirely. For nearly eight miles we followed the trek towards Delagoa Bay, and were soon at the far end of the Long Kop. The bush from this point became much thicker, and the general aspect of the country grew wilder and more densely wooded. The path curved and wound backwards and forwards and from one side to the other, in the most vague and extraordinary manner, and in itself gave an excellent demonstration of the naturally lazy and indolent character of the Kaffir. Whenever a small tree or bush, or even clump of grass, had either grown up in the path or had stretched out a thorny twig across it, there the path would take a sharp turn round in a half-circle to avoid it, and the branch was left in undisputed possession of the whole road. One blow with a stick, or a cut with an assegai, would have cleared away the incumbrance and left the road free; but no,—that would be quite an uncalled for display of energy on the part of a Kaffir; and although in the course of the year many hundreds are constantly passing to and fro, yet not one of them ever thinks of attempting to clear an obstacle out of his own and his successors' way.

Passing through a space thickly covered with rocks and lumps of decaying granite, we saw a large boa-constrictor coiled against a ledge of rock, and sunning itself in the fierce rays which were reflected back on its glistening scales from the sides of the rock. It was the largest snake I had ever seen, and I hardly knew how to attack it to the best advantage,

and was not quite sure whether or no to expect an attack from it. Jacob soon settled the question of how to kill the beast, which did not seem at all afraid of us, but just lay still, slowly moving his wicked-looking head backwards and forwards, taking in our every movement with his cruel cunning eyes. The boy took up a big stone and walking up to within a yard of the snake, which began to raise its body at his approach, he dashed it down on its head, and before it had recovered from the shock, dealt it a blow with his assegai across the neck, which completely severed the head from the body. The long coils of body seemed, instead of being deprived of life, to have suddenly become endowed with some mad spirit, for the headless trunk wound itself round and round the rock, gave convulsive bounds into the air, and dashed itself against the ground and stones. As the head was gone I did not care about the skin, so we left the body where it was, still turning and twisting in a thousand coils. Its length was about eighteen feet, but the muscles were so powerful that we could not pull it out straight to measure, and we had not the spare time to wait for its death-throes to subside, when it would have become limp and flexible. Jacob carefully preserved the head. As "mootie" (medicine) it is much prized by all Kaffirs, and they attribute different sovereign virtues to its various parts. The brains will give the man who eats them great cunning in the arts of war and the chase, and he will always get the better of his enemies in strategy and craftiness. If he eats the eyes he will be able to see in the night if ever an enemy

or a beast of prey is lying in wait to destroy him. The snake's tongue stretched out and dried is the most renowned love amulet of the witch-doctors, and will fetch a very high price from any love-sick Kaffir boy. Jacob regarded this as rather a dangerous sort of love-charm, and he firmly believed that if ever he gave it as a token of unalterable affection for his dusky sweetheart, the king of the snakes would thenceforth take the girl under his protection, and kill the giver if he proved unfaithful. The head of the boa itself, when these specific charms have been taken out, is still very valuable worn round the neck as a charm against sickness or calamity of any kind. Soon after having killed the snake we came upon the boys, who were resting awhile under the shade of some thick kameel-thorns, so called because they are taller than any of the other varieties of the mimosa, and also have a shoot which the long-necked animals are especially partial too. I roused the boys, and we went along the path for another five miles before we caught up W., who was waiting for us at a place known far and near as Hart's Station; once a small but comfortable log-hut, with its little garden around it, but now only a few broken-down walls, and a mass of cinders. The place had a very gruesome appearance, which the tragic tale connected with it helped to foster.

Here was the first water we had come across, but no one unacquainted with the place would have been able to find it. The little stream itself was quite dried up; but by following it down some distance

and then turning up another smaller stream also dried up, which led into it, one of the boys brought us to a pool of water left in a deep hole worn into the rock, and shaded from the sun by another large overhanging ledge which prevented its evaporation. Here we made a halt for a couple of hours, as our twelve miles march in the hot sun made the cool shade of the trees and the clear cold water look a very inviting place for us to halt at. While stretched out on the long soft grass and enjoying our pipes, Woodward gave me the history connected with Hart's Station, from its very commencement.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Transport and Railroads—Empty Coffers—Assassination—
Friends in Need—The Ruined Hut—Our Line of March
—No Supper—An Impromptu Stable—Lions about—Water
scarce—Hard up for Food.

THE greatest obstacle in the way of the Transvaal's progress and prosperity has been, and always will be, the almost unsurmountable difficulties it has to contend with in transporting its produce to the coast and obtaining its own imported articles. As it is at present, there is no other means of transportation than by the slow and uncertain ox-waggon. The distance from Pretoria to Durban is about four hundred miles; goods can never be brought up or taken down under at least five weeks, and very frequently they are twice or three times as long on the journey. The rate of carriage, it naturally follows, has to be enormous to repay the transport rider for his capital laid out in oxen and waggons, for the same spans can only make the trips backwards and forwards twice in the year at most. Many oxen die on the journey, and waggons constantly need repairing. Drivers and foreloupers have to be paid high wages, all which causes make a high rate absolutely needful to induce men to invest their capital in such a risky occupation as transport-riding. The rate runs up

and down from as low as 1*l.* per cwt. up to even 4*l.* In the months of October, November, December, and January, when the grass is good and travelling is easy, the rates will fall very low, as there is so much the less chance of oxen dying on the road from starvation, and the journey can be completed in much quicker time. At other times of the year, however, when the grass is bad, the rates will go up and up, until only fancy prices will induce a transport-rider to risk his span at all; and then of course, as the supplies of the country run short, every imported commodity or article of consumption increases proportionately in price.

The Dutch Government, before the annexation by the British, quite realized how impossible it would be for their country ever to attain any high degree of prosperity, or even of civilization, under these conditions. A railway was naturally their first and most eagerly sought for improvement.

Surveyors were engaged to report upon the possibility of a line down to Natal; but this was soon found to be, for the present, impracticable on two accounts: the unwillingness of the Natal Government to coalesce with that of the Transvaal, or to render them assistance in any way, and the nature of the country through which the line would have to run. The surveyors declared that, although possible to construct this railway, yet it would cost an enormous sum of money and be a labour of years.

Mr. Bergers, the energetic president of the Zuid-Afrikan Republic, although unlucky in his first attempt, was not to be beaten, and at once turned

his attention to the possibility of running a line to Delagoa Bay. The surveyors were again set to work, and after a lengthened survey the line was not only declared feasible, but to be very easy of construction.

The only difficulties which seemed to be in its way were the two precipitous Bergs, the difficulty of obtaining labour, and the impossibility of taking oxen or horses into the country below the Berg on account of the tsetse fly. These difficulties, however, were smoothed away, as it was found that by taking the line away to the south, the Berg could be avoided to a great extent; several tribes round about would send gangs of labourers; and to do away with the necessity for horses or oxen the line could be roughly laid and all the building materials carried along on it as they proceeded.

Mr. Bergers was jubilant, and at once set to work to have the contracts made and so lose no time in setting to work. A large portion of the railway plant arrived, and all the arrangements for its speedy construction were concluded.

Unluckily, the contractor one day suggested that an instalment of money would be advisable; and lo! it was found that the coffers of the Republic were absolutely empty. In vain the Boers were entreated to pay their taxes and so save their country; but not a dollar could the unhappy President raise, and offers of every description in the way of grants of land, mortgages of revenue, and future taxation were made instead; but the constructors of the railway would take nothing but actual hard cash

down ; and so the Delagoa Bay and Transvaal Railway subsided more suddenly than it had sprung up.

Mr. Bergers was not yet beaten. As he could not have his railway, he offered to grant the whole of the low country below the Berg to any man who should start a regular carrying service between the Gold Fields or Leydenburg and Delagoa Bay, either by Kaffir carriers, ox-waggons, pack-oxen, or donkeys, or with any combination of these methods. For some time no one was found bold enough for the undertaking ; but at last a man came forward, and being helped in every way by the Government, started a line of waggons to run from the Gold Fields to below Pretorius Kop. From Pretorius Kop to Delagoa Bay, nearly the entire length of which lay in the region of the fly, he organized a line of boys to carry the loads to and from the waggons. A station was started below the Kop, another 15 miles further on, in charge of which a man named Hart was placed, and several others further on towards Delagoa. For some months the waggons went regularly enough, and all the storekeepers in the Eastern Transvaal began to feel the benefit of such a quick mode of carriage ; but gradually all regularity ceased, and from a service of two waggons a week it gradually fell away to only one occasionally. Oxen died, or were stolen ; waggons came to grief over the rock-covered precipitous road ; the land and farms granted by the Government were absolutely valueless and unsaleable, and the proprietor soon found himself almost bankrupt.

Meanwhile, there had been constant disturbances

with the Kaffirs. At the station below the Kop a large party had come down and destroyed the house, stolen anything of value it contained, and driven away the occupants, who refused to go back there. The men at the other stations followed their example and deserted, with the exception of Hart, who refused to leave his post until he was regularly recalled. The man was a universal favourite with all who knew him, and was ever kind and hospitable to whites and blacks alike who might need his assistance. He spent his time in hunting, collecting plants, and taming various birds and animals; and he had a collection of various kinds of pets, among them bôk of various kinds, parrots, jays, monkeys, and snakes. He was on friendly terms with whatever Kaffirs he ever came across, and apprehended no danger from his solitary and defenceless situation; and in all probability, if others had followed his example in dealing with the Kaffirs, no harm would ever have befallen him.

One day a party of armed Macatees came up to his door, and in angry terms told him that a few days previously some white men by Pretorius Kop had met a Macatee of their tribe who was in possession of a gun. The whites had taken this gun away from him in the most unjustifiable manner. The boy had returned to the head kraal and told his story. Instantly the present party had set out in pursuit of the offenders, but had been unable to come up with them. However, they were convinced that they were in some way connected with Hart, and at all events Hart was a white man, even if not con-

nected with the actual robbers of the gun ; and they speedily gave him to understand that he must give them his rifle in exchange for the one they had been deprived of. If he did this they promised to go away and leave him in peace. Hart naturally objected to this disposal of his property, and argued long against it, and indeed refused to part with his rifle at any hazard. This conversation had taken place while he had been standing in his doorway. He then stepped outside altogether, to try and persuade the whole band to go away and leave him in peace, for he probably saw that some of them were his friends and inclined to be guided by his words. While, however, he was haranguing them, one murderous wretch going behind him put up his rifle, and shot him through the head, blowing off the top of his skull.

As the band had nothing to gain by remaining, they stripped his little hut of everything of any value, killed all his pets, set fire to the roof and to the outhouses, and then departed in possession of the disputed gun, leaving the murdered man where he had fallen, but stripped of his clothes, which they divided among themselves.

It so happened that two white men, friends of Hart, were then staying amongst the Amaswazi across the Crocodile River. News of the assassination was brought to the Swazi king, who communicated it to these two, and to their lasting honour be it said they at once took means to have the body properly buried, by paying a party of Swazis very heavily to go to the ruined hut, and put their friend

under ground and out of the reach of jackals and vultures. The burying party arrived and found the corpse still un mutilated, for the charred embers and the still standing walls had kept off the animals which would otherwise have feasted on it. The boys buried the body and then returned to the kraal, but there is no stone or memorial to mark the exact spot where the poor fellow lies. No retribution was ever exacted from his murderers, and in fact it was never made certain who they were, but the particulars were all gathered from boys who had heard the details from the participators in the crime. Like many another murder by Kaffirs, it would never have taken place but for the provocation and violence of the whites in the first instance. Although two wrongs do not make a right, yet all the blame must not be attached to the blacks, who merely followed out the example set them of the stronger oppressing the weaker, and obeyed the omnipotent law which the British Government itself is guided by in its dealings with South Africa—that "Might is Right."

After hearing the history of Hart's Station I walked round to have a closer inspection of the scene of such a tragedy. Parts of the four walls were still standing, and the door-posts had not been much burnt. Round about were many heads and horns of koodoo, wildebeeste, and sarsapi, and among them was one magnificent pair of swart-vitpensens or sable antelopes. Exposure to the weather had much destroyed them, and one horn was cracked in two, or else I should have felt inclined to call for them on my way back as a memento of the place

and story. A rude bench still remained outside the window, and also a broken hutch in which some animal had evidently been kept, and the heap of logs was still untouched which had been collected together for fuel. The little hut is now occasionally used by wandering Kaffirs as a shelter for the night, but it will be long before another white man will be found to live in it, and perhaps share the same fate.

While at Hart's the tsetse fly first made its appearance, and I suddenly discovered three or four on my horse. It did not seem to mind them being on, and they certainly cannot sting or irritate in the same manner as the ordinary forest fly. In size the tsetse is slightly larger than the ordinary black house-fly and it is not unlike it in shape and colour; a little greyer, and with faintly marked bars of grey and black across its body, like a wasp. Its sting is of the most extraordinarily penetrating nature. One has sometimes settled upon my leg covered with the thick moleskin breeches which will turn the sharpest thorn, and almost the instant the insect has alighted I have felt a sharp prick like a needle, as the proboscis pierced through the breeches and through my skin as well. But the stab once given there is no more pain at all, even if the fly is allowed to feast for a considerable period. On my own flesh the sting never raised any mark beyond a small red spot, and caused no irritation or swelling at all, but possibly on another's it might cause more inflammation.

It is a strange problem why this fly should work sure death to any domestic animal, with the excep-

tion of the donkey (and even this exception is disputed), and yet that all the wild game, and amongst them many small and delicate bôk, with tender skins, should not be affected in the least by it. A story is told of the experiment once having been tried of breeding in the tsetse district, on the chance of the young ones becoming naturalized to the sting; but the enterprising experimenter quite forgot the fact, that his breeding-stock were not so naturalized, and they of course were stung and died before any result was obtained.

As soon as we were sufficiently rested our march was resumed. For some three miles further we kept along the footpath, and then Woodward, under whose direction we moved, turned off to the left at almost right angles to our previous direction, and we proceeded, but more slowly, to pick our way through the bush, which here and there changed into woods. We took as our guiding beacon a high peak of rock which showed out clear from a low range of broken-up hillocks, whenever we were on any slight elevation. All day long we had kept up a careful watch for game; but, much to our surprise, not even a blue wildebeeste or quagga crossed the path. At starting off in the morning we had made up our minds not to fire at any small game; but as evening drew near, and the pangs of hunger made themselves felt, our resolutions grew very weak, and I fear that any bôk, however small, which had afforded me an easy shot, would have successfully tempted me to fire at it. As it was, not a living thing did we see; and although we put off making our camp for the night as late

as possible, we at last had to halt without any meat, but to make up for it we discovered a small hole of clear water between two high rocks, which lay in the bed of a now dry stream. The boys were heartily glad that their work was done for the day, they had lagged behind considerably the last few miles, and shown evident symptoms of fatigue.

Our arrangements for the night were soon made. First we selected a thick clump of thorns and cut a passage right into the centre of it, large enough to form a stable for my horse, which would afford an ample protection for it from the lions. At the entrance we swung the tent, and in front of that made up the fire for our cooking; while on the other sides the boys erected huge fires for their use, as well as to keep off the lions. Hungry as we were, there was nothing for us to do but share the boys' supper of mealie-meal pap, and we had the extra delicacy of a few dried peaches to give a flavouring. While the pap was being cooked we employed ourselves in cutting and collecting any patches we could find of fresh green grass for the horse, and were able to provide it with the best feed it had had for months. So as to counteract the effect of the unaccustomed green food, it had some of the crushed mealies as well, but it was only on compulsion that it eat them when we would supply no more grass. Jacob meanwhile had been cutting bundles of the long soft grass, going all round with his assegai, and a bundle of this he presently brought up to form our beds. Over our frugal supper we were at all events able to congratulate

ourselves upon having kept to our resolution of not firing at any small game, and I really think it made the pap taste better; and we never breathed a syllable to each other of how ready we should have been to break it had an opportunity presented itself. Almost before daylight had disappeared we heard the distant "umph, umph" of a lion; and by the time it was dark two of them were patrolling round and round the camp, evidently attracted by the chance of making a meal on my poor horse. The boys piled up their fires yards high, and the flames shot up into the air, casting the most grotesque shadows around, but giving us a very cosy and cheerful appearance. By the time we had finished our pipes, and, as a make-up for the poor supper, had a tot of square-face apiece, we were ready to turn in.

My bed of soft aromatic tambooti-grass felt more comfortable and grateful than any feather bed ever did before, and I was very soon oblivious of the growls of the lions, the noise of the boys, and the uneasy movements of my horse whenever one of the lions took a nearer turn round than usual.

We were up before the sun, and made our breakfast on mealie-pap, and a very unsatisfactory breakfast it was; for although a man might easily accustom himself to such kind of food, it is not nearly strong and stimulating enough for men who are in the habit of eating an unlimited supply of meat daily, and are taking heavy exercise. It does not matter what quantity one eats at a meal, for within an hour or so its effect has passed off, and leaves one as

hungry as ever. About noon we arrived at the peak which had been our guiding beacon, and from it selected a clump of trees in a straight line beyond as our new marching-point. During the morning's walk of at least twelve miles we had seen no living animal of any description; and, what was much more discouraging, had not come across any fresh spoor. All the sloots we had crossed over were dried up, and there did not seem to be any immediate prospect of water. The trees sheltered us to a great extent from the sun, and the walking was easy, so we did not delay long at the midday halt, but several of the boys had fallen behind during the tramp of the morning, and we had to wait for them to come up. As soon as they were all present, we set off again, for it was evident we were not yet in the game country, and indeed the scarcity of water was of itself sufficient to account for the absence of game. The afternoon march was a very weary one; we all began to feel the want of water severely, and the weak food we had had for the last thirty-six hours made Woodward and myself all the less able to stand the heat. I had my horse led the whole way, so as to keep it fresh in case of being wanted for hunting purposes; but although with nothing to carry, it was looking as tired and thirsty as we were. The sun sank very low in the sky, and still we saw no sign of either game or water; but just as it disappeared below the tops of the trees, we came to a broad sloot, with a white sandy bed, in which here and there were growing large patches of green flags. For another mile we pro-

ceeded up the dry channel, on the chance of coming across perhaps a reed-bôk, or other animal, but without success, and when we came to a convenient spot we made our camp for the night. Water of some sort had been assured to us directly we saw the green reeds. We had hoped to find a pool still full in some sheltered spot; but as we did not, the boys at once set to work with the spade and their assegais to dig a hole down to the roots of the green flag. A couple of feet of dry sand were cleared out, and I began to fear that the boys were deceived in their calculations, but a few more inches uncovered a layer of black muddy slime. As this was thrown on the shelving sides of the hole, the moisture trickled back into the centre of the cavity, and in an hour's time we had a pool of water half a foot deep, and constantly replenishing itself as we emptied it. The first bucket we gave to my horse, who was daintier than we were, and only sipped the mixture, which rather resembled black pea-soup. However, as Woodward remarked, it was meat and drink at the same time. The mealie-meal pap had a decidedly repulsive appearance when made of this black water; still, it did not much affect the taste, and made it go all the further, but the coffee was not at all a success. We constructed a stable for my horse on the same principles as on the previous night. There was plenty of grass about, which afforded capital feed, and we were glad not to be obliged to give him any crushed mealies, as under the present aspect of affairs it looked very probable we should want them for our own food before long.

The boys were utterly disheartened, as they had expected to fall in with buffalo on the first day. They sat round the fire rubbing their hands over their stomachs with the most woe-begone countenances, and encouraged each other in the most gloomy prognostications of our position. To lighten their hearts a little, I presented each boy with a small bit of tobacco from our own rather scanty store, and it had the effect of making them take a little happier view of the situation. They had collected two huge stacks of firewood, each as big as a small hay-stack, because, from the nature of the country, they expected more lions than usual; but we were disagreeably disappointed, for we never even heard one until we awoke in the morning, and a far-distant growl told us that the king of the forest was returning home. Even our hunger could not disguise the fact that mealie-meal pap is a most insipid article of diet, and when made with black water no man can desire a less tempting breakfast. But it was that or nothing; so after devouring as much of the stuff as we could force down, we started off on our third day's adventures, with deep vows that something should die before we made our evening camp, and that we would not again go to bed hungry. Our best chance of finding water, and therefore in all probability game, was by keeping along the corner of the slood, which, to all appearances, when full, ran into the Sabie.

CHAPTER XXX.

Inyati! Inyati!—A Lioness—Meat in Profusion—The Boys gorge themselves—More Buffalo—A narrow Escape—A fine Giraffe.

BEFORE we had gone many miles along our new course, the nature of the country changed. The trees gave way to thorns again, and a short crisp grass took the place of the long tufts we had hitherto been walking through.

The boys grew more hopeful, and quickened the pace of their own accord. Soon we came across some very fresh spoor of imparla, going in the same direction as ourselves, and a mile further on we came upon quite a large pool of sweet clear water. After we had plentifully drunk of it, and both horse and boys had as much as they desired, Woodward and I enjoyed a splendid bath, which quite set up our spirits again, and made us feel as fresh and jolly as when we started. While we were bathing, the boys had been carefully examining the damp soil all round, which retained the spoor of every animal that had been to drink, it was in places quite beaten down with numberless marks of game.

Any quantity of imparla, quagga, and blue wildebeeste, and several lions and giraffe, had been about only the previous night; but, much to our dis-

appointment, we could not pick out a single buffalo spoor which had been made since the last rains. With so much game about, there was no doubt about getting something before night, and we saw that our pouches were full of cartridges, and rifles all ready, before we again set off. As there could be no difficulty in again hitting off the others who were still following the sloop, I mounted my horse, and with Jacob set off to make a wide détour to the left. The thorns were so thick that I had some difficulty in getting through them; but the boy, unimpeded with clothes, slipped through like an eel. A herd of pigs dashed out of some bushes close to us, but skurried away without giving me a fair chance of a shot.

Very soon afterwards a long line of *imparla* appeared crossing an open space upon a piece of rising ground to our left. I left my horse where we were, and with Jacob cautiously made my way towards them, to obtain an easy shot. The line must have been half a mile long, and seemed as if it was never coming to an end. I was adjusting the 400-yards sight to my rifle, thinking I would not risk getting any closer as the *bôk* were affording a clear shot, when Jacob, by a low, long whistle, drew my attention to the ground at our feet, and I did not need him to tell me that what I saw, was quite fresh buffalo spoor. So fresh, in fact, it looked, that for some moments we peered through the bushes on all sides of us, expecting to see the buffalo themselves. We thought no more of the *imparla*, which had disappeared into the bush while we were deliberating, but turned all our attention to the nobler

game. On closer examination we discovered that the spoor all led in the same direction, and at right angles to our own line, so in all probability the herd, which, from the spoor numbered a couple of hundred, either had or would cross the path of Woodward and the other boys. There was no difficulty in following it up, for a wide path had been forced through the bush, and broken twigs everywhere showed the way, without our even having to look on the ground.

The spoor led straight to the slood, and there turned up along the side. As the rest of the party were behind us, we waited for them to come up. We had not very long to wait for their arrival, but my patience was nearly exhausted notwithstanding.

The boys were so delighted that they could hardly restrain themselves from shouting and dancing. Woodward and myself were almost equally elated, though we did not show it in the same exultant manner. So as not to be impeded in our movements by the packages the boys carried, we determined to follow up the slood until we came to the first likely place for water, and from thence leaving a couple of boys to prepare our camp for the night, start off on the spoor of the buffalo. Fortune favoured us; and just at the spot where the herd had themselves turned off from the slood, we found a pool of water still left in a cleft of the rocks. It did not look at all inviting, as the surface was completely covered over with green blotches, but still it was better than we had any right to expect to find without digging at that time of year.

Only waiting long enough to give my horse a

drink, and let the boys wash their mouths out, we set out again on the spoor. Jacob kept his position in front, and I close behind him with Woodward near me, and the other boys pressing close up to us. Suddenly Jacob dropped as if he had been shot, and with arm stretched out towards a rise to our right, and with eyes almost starting from his head, hissed out "Inyati! inyati!" and there, following the direction of his arm, about a mile away, we made out a mass of great brown-looking objects slowly moving along amongst the trees. We held a short consultation with the boys, and then I with half of them started off to head the herd by a circuitous route, while Woodward and the remainder followed up the spoor in their rear.

The thorns grew thicker and thicker at every yard we advanced; and although I was now on horseback, I had great difficulty in keeping up with the boys, for the ground was covered with loose pieces of quartz and rock. I had taken my heavy double-barrel rifle from Jacob at the first sign of the buffalo, and given him my Martini-Henry to carry instead. At last we came to the end of the thorns, and on passing out of them suddenly saw the buffalo within a hundred yards of us, evidently alarmed by the noise we had been making on our way through the dry crackling bushes.

As we emerged they set off galloping at right angles to us. Setting spurs into my horse, I was almost alongside of the racing herd in an instant; but my horse, frightened at the noise the huge beasts made crashing through the underwood, the thuds

of their hoofs on the hard ground, and their bel-lowings and snortings, began to plunge and rear violently. I jumped off, and either from being too excited and unsteady to take any proper aim, or from my horse pulling my arm as I fired, made a clean miss at a splendid bull tearing past, not fifteen yards from where I stood. The herd only increased their speed, and the line still continued to pass by me at the same distance. The first failure and disappointment steadied me in an instant, and taking a more quiet aim at the shoulder of one of the hinder ones, I had the satisfaction of seeing him—for it was another bull—stumble forward and fall over within twenty yards of where he was hit. Jacob had now come up and handed me the other rifle, with which I hit the very last of the line, but did not kill it. Leaving the bull where it was, on we dashed after the herd, but they struck for the thickest thorns and soon distanced us. When I had time to think of scratches, I discovered that all that remained to me of what had once been a flannel shirt was the neck, shoulders, and a few long ragged strips; the rest of it being left on the thorns we had pushed through, and my body looked as if I had been scarified all over.

Jacob had left me to try and follow up the wounded buffalo, which had turned off from the herd, always a sure sign of a mortal hurt. As I was riding back alone, in the direction of our camp, from a clump of reeds and grass, at some little distance from me, I caught a glimpse of an animal raising itself for an instant, and after a hasty look round it sank down again out of sight. At first, seeing it so

indistinctly, I thought it was a doe reed-bòk, but while I was still watching, I perceived that it was a lioness, for she again raised her head and neck to have another look-out to discover what all the disturbance was about. She saw I had observed her, and without attempting to hide again, sank down low and went skulking off through the long grass, but presently she had to cross an open space before she could reach the shelter of the bush. Seeing this, I jumped off my horse and put up my 300-yards sight, which I judged the distance to be. Sure enough out she came, and taking a steady aim, I fired; but I had misjudged the distance, which was nearer 400, and instead of hitting her in the heart the bullet passed through the foreleg nearest to me. She went down for an instant on the ground, roaring horribly, but before I could load again had disappeared in the reeds on the other side. While I was attempting to hit upon her tracks some of the boys came up and soon found several spots of blood.

Nothing, however, would induce them to follow her up in the reeds, and I myself, after several unsuccessful attempts to keep on the spoor, had to give it up as a bad job, and retrace my steps towards the camp. I had heard several shots from Woodward, and soon after came up with him. He had not been in such a good position as I had, but nevertheless had killed a bull. The boys had already been at work on both the dead buffalos, and were soon loaded with such heavy weights of flesh that they staggered along under them. Evening

was approaching, so we lost no time in making for the spot we had fixed on as our camp. The two boys we had left in charge, in anticipation of meat, had already lighted the fire to cook it at; and in a very few minutes dozens of sticks were stuck in the ground leading towards the fire, on each of which were spitted eight or ten knobs of flesh. The boys took handfuls of the flesh only just warmed, and, eating it as they went, started off to bring back more loads of meat. Woodward selected various titbits from each load as it was brought in, and he also told one of the boys to cut out for our use pieces from the rump of each buffalo, and also the kidneys, which are the most dainty bits of the whole meat. Jacob returned while we were still busy, grinning all over, and bearing the tail of the wounded buffalo he had followed up and killed, as a trophy of his success. Our camp looked exactly like a butcher's shop, for from every twig and branch were hanging long strips of raw meat, and marrow-bones, and pieces of skin were littered all over the ground.

My horse had shown great signs of weakness during the day, and had on several occasions stumbled very badly, which made us fear that the fly-poison was already beginning to affect it, although not supposed to do so until the rainy season set in. As the smell of the fresh meat, and the trails of the boys carrying it and leading right up to our camp, were sure to attract lions from all directions, we were especially careful in making a secure stable for the horse, and in having an ample supply of firewood. We also had the gourds and buckets filled with

water, in addition to the billy and pipkins, as we knew that nothing in the world would induce a boy to go and fetch water after dusk when there was any chance of a lion being about. The tempting odours from the frizzling meat made our hunger almost unbearable, and it seemed that never had kidneys taken so long to fry before. Woodward, who was chef for the occasion, at last declared them to be sufficiently cooked. They quite recompensed us for the waiting, as they were done to a turn; and never had kidneys tasted so well as these did. Fried in their own fat, and tender as possible, from being so fresh killed that they had not any time to cool, they made a dinner for hungry men, who had been three days without meat, that I shall never forget. Marrow-bones, of course, we finished up with, and over our pipes and tot of square-face were able contentedly to watch the boys.

It was such a scene as I am powerless to describe. Each boy sat at the fire in front of his own particular stick or ramrod, on which were the little knobs of meat; but beside each was a pile of long strips about an inch thick, and some of them a yard in length. While his knobs were slowly roasting the boy would take one of these long strips, containing at least half a pound of meat, and, holding one end in the flame, would let it get toasted for a few seconds; then he would place that end in his mouth, and begin to chew it, placing the still uncooked end in the flame, and at the same time watching that the knobs on his stick did not get burnt. For three hours or more not a boy moved from the fire, except to

cut up a fresh supply of meat or to have a drink of water. All this time they hardly spoke a word, so intent were they on gorging themselves; but as the night advanced they broke into a low, monotonous sort of humming chant, during which, one after the other, they recounted some adventure of the day, or expressed their delight at so much good food, the others all the while keeping up an accompanying chorus of the humming chant. Occasionally they would raise their voices to a yell, and then sink them so low as to be almost inaudible. Woodward and myself turned into our blankets, and were soon lulled asleep by the monotonous but not unpleasant singing. All through the night the boys alternately ate or sang, and several times when I awoke I saw them still hard at work chewing down the yards of meat. The natural consequence of this gormandizing followed; and next morning, when we wanted to make a start, three-quarters of the boys were utterly unfit to proceed, being literally drunk, to all appearances, from the huge quantities of meat they had consumed. Their eyes were rolling, they could hardly walk straight, and they spoke and looked as if they were insensible to what was going on around them. Under these circumstances, there was nothing to do for it but stay where we were for the day, and make the best of a bad job. Woodward and I, accompanied by Jacob and two of the other boys, who had not made such beasts of themselves as the rest, started off to find the spoor of the buffaloes, and, if possible, follow it up until we came upon them again.

I took my horse with me, but led it instead of riding, so as to tire it as little as possible, and have it fresh for any sudden spurt I might want to make. We soon came upon the spot where we had left the spoor the previous night, and for several miles followed it up with no difficulty. But soon we came to a place where another lot of buffalo had crossed those we were following, and as it was only a few hours old we turned to them and left the herd we had been after. The fresh trail led us straight towards the slood on the banks of which our camp was situated, and presently crossed over it.

On the other side the herd, which we could see by the spoor in the sand of the slood to number some thirty or forty, had loitered about a little, plucking some tufts of green grass, and the spoor was very warm when we again hit off the line of it through the bush. We used now greater precaution than ever; Jacob went ahead of us, creeping through the grass and bushes, and taking advantage of every piece of cover to have a good look-out over the ground ahead of him before even entering on any open space. His low whistle presently announced to us that the game was close at hand, and on crawling up to where he lay flat on his face behind a clump of Tambooti grass, we saw the herd not above four hundred yards away from us, quietly feeding, and quite unconscious of danger. They were just too far away for us to fire, and in our position we could not either advance or turn to one side without being perceived by them; so there was nothing for us to do but stay where we were until

they either came closer to us, or changed their ground so as to allow us to creep up nearer. The wind was in our teeth, so there was no danger to be apprehended from that source. Very slowly the herd moved away, and gradually all disappeared in the bushes. We this time made a wide *détour*, so as to come upon them broadside, instead of behind. When within what we knew must not be far from where they were, I left the horse, and we crawled along, imitating as best we could every movement of Jacob, who slipped along in the most contorted positions as fast as if he had been upright. We heard a bull snorting before we came within sight, and almost immediately after the foremost appeared slowly moving along, with their heads on the ground, feeding. Jacob handed me the ten-bore; Woodward took the Martini-Henry. Three bulls were now within fifty yards of us, so picking out the first and Woodward the last of the trio, we took aim and fired almost simultaneously. Mine did not fall, so I gave it the second barrel to make sure, as it was dashing off with the rest of the herd, who, with their heads down and tails waving, were madly making off through the bushes. My bull, although with two bullets in it, was not yet dead, and stood savagely glaring at us as we emerged from our cover. But as it was trying to rally its remaining strength for a rush, it fell over, quite dead. I sent Jacob back for my horse, and mounting, galloped after the herd, which had made a turn in the direction of our camp, but on the other side of the sloop. As usual, they made straight for a thicket

of dense thorn, into which it was impossible to follow them. Just before they reached it I came up close enough for a snap shot, luckily wounding a cow, which turned off from the herd and made across the slood. The bullet from my second barrel fell short, and by the time I crossed she had disappeared. The ground was too hard to retain any spoor, so there was no means of following the cow up in the thick bush, where we could pass within a stone's throw without observing her.

As we had now killed two, we made our way back towards camp to despatch boys back to the spot for the meat, and also the horns off the one which had fallen to my share, which happened to be remarkably fine ones. Jacob was left behind to guard the carcasses. As we were nearing the camp loud cries attracted our steps to the right, and presently we became aware that one of the boys was perched upon the top of a high rock, and hallooing at the top of his voice. We called out to let him know of our presence, and he then yelled back that we were to be careful, as a wounded buffalo was down below him on the other side of the rock. There, sure enough, when we had made our way round, appeared the cow I had wounded beyond the slood. The ball had passed through the lower part of her belly, and the blood was oozing out of the wound on both sides. As she became aware of our approach she turned round and faced towards us, swinging her tail backwards and forwards, tossing her head with its sharp-pointed horns up in the air, and snorting and groaning with rage. Deceived by her helpless

appearance, and in spite of Woodward's expostulations, I jumped off my horse and walked towards her, hoping to move round so as to get a broadside shot at the shoulder ; but as I walked round she did the same, and never exposed any part to me except her neck and head, protected by the horns, with eyes all red and bloodshot glaring fiercely beneath them. She looked anything but a pleasing object ; froth was dropping from her mouth, and with her tail she occasionally switched the bleeding wounds, and smeared her sides and back all red with blood. Twice I walked round her at a distance of some thirty yards, and twice she moved round so as always to face me. If I had been armed with the double-barrel ten-bore I should not have cared, but with the Martini-Henry it did not do to risk a miss, as there was only the one chance. Gradually I decreased the distance between us, and was just meditating giving her a bullet fair below the forehead and just above the muzzle, where there is a small vulnerable spot, when she cut short my deliberations by putting down her head and charging straight at me as if she was not wounded at all, and had the full power of her strength. I aimed steadily and fired, but the ball glanced off her horns, and she came on only the faster and more furiously. I turned and ran, but the soles of my boots were slippery, and every instant she gained on me, as I went back one step for every three I took forward. Woodward was in a straight line ahead of me, and did not dare fire, as to hit the buffalo the bullet must have passed through my body.

Suddenly my foot slipped, and down I went head over heels, my rifle flying up into the air as I fell. The cow was within a couple of yards of me, and in imagination I felt the beast's hot breath upon me. With a sort of convulsive acrobatic scramble I managed, more by instinct than reason, to double myself up behind the trunk of a small tree not more than a few inches in diameter, which happened to grow between the cow and myself. The slim trunk bent double and cracked as the full weight of the beast came against it, but luckily for me she struck it fair between the horns, and was hurled over on her side half-stunned; there the beast lay for an instant helpless, which gave my companion time to run up and put a bullet through the heart, after which she never even moved a muscle. The whole occurrence had taken such a moment that I had not had time to be frightened myself; but Woodward's face showed that he thought he had spoken to me for the last time, and I could hardly persuade him that I had sustained no injury at all, as from his position it had appeared to him that my fall was occasioned by the cow's horns running into my back. I made up my mind on the spot that I would never again face a wounded buffalo at close quarters when there was no real occasion to do so; and as no harm came, the lesson was not thrown away on either of us, for we were both more cautious for the future.

We proceeded to cut the best meat off the carcase of the cow, and with that and the tail as a trophy and memento of my narrow escape, we set off

to camp. Loud were the exclamations of our boys when the Kaffir, who had been a witness of my adventure, narrated it with many exaggerations and additions of his own. The generally expressed opinion was that I must have "eaten some very powerful medicine" to have had such a lucky escape; and several of the boys in private inquired what sort of charm I wore as a protection against such accidents.

The boys had been gathering different plants and bulbs, which they boiled together to make some sort of "mootie." Copious draughts of this had cured them of all the ill effects of their gorging. Nevertheless, they feasted on late into the night in spite of their recent illness; but as they were now more accustomed to the meat diet, they were able to proceed on the trek next morning. We had a capital breakfast of buffalo-steaks before starting, and the boys loaded themselves with enough meat to last for several days, in case of not falling in with more game. We kept the same direction towards the Limbombo Mountains, and at our mid-day halt they did not look more than twenty or thirty miles distant from us. During the afternoon a solitary giraffe crossed slowly through the trees in front. I jumped on my horse, but the giraffe, suddenly aware of danger, started off at a great pace, clearing the ground in long awkward leaps. For some distance the bull—as his dark-coloured skin showed him to be—rather gained on me than I on him; but luckily the bush was too low to hide him from me. Gradually his pace slackened, and, putting the spurs into my horse, I

was very soon close alongside. I determined, however, not to waste a chance by firing too soon, and urged on my horse closer and closer. As the huge ungainly animal grew more and more tired his gait became very unsteady, and several times he brushed very heavily against the trees in efforts to avoid them. He kept switching his long dark tail high above his back, and then down again, and from side to side. I had my Martini-Henry with me, so I could trust to its penetrating even the thick, tough skin of the kameel. It was only now a question of time for me to get up quite alongside, and soon I was within a few feet of the swinging tail. I put in the spurs again, and my horse, making one bound forward, placed me level with the animal's shoulder; as I passed him, whether by accident or design, the giraffe kicked out so far with his hind hoof that my horse was almost hit by it. To give an idea of the giraffe's height, the muzzle of my rifle was considerably elevated as I put it up and fired right in behind the shoulder. For an instant the animal stopped dead, and my horse passed on beyond. While I was loading again the giraffe turned off to one side, but I was again close to it in a few bounds, and this time put a bullet through the neck. Down toppled the lofty head, and with many convulsive struggles the great carcase lay lifeless before me. I could not help thinking what a pigmy I looked beside it, for it must have measured full eighteen feet from the top of its little hair-covered horns to the hoofs.

The giraffe differs in its mode of progression from most other four-footed animals, which move a right

fore-leg and left hind-leg at the same time, or *vice versa*; but the giraffe moves both his right legs simultaneously, and then follows with the left. The eyes of the giraffe are the most beautiful and appealing of any animal I ever saw, and it is supposed to be able to see both before and behind without turning its head; but, from the position of the eyes in the skull, I never could see why it should enjoy superior advantages of vision to other animals. A giraffe is the most defenceless animal imaginable, and has nothing to show fight with even if so inclined; it is easily tired out and run down, so although fleet for a short distance, it does not afford much sport. Unless the hunter has opportunities of utilizing the skin, it always appeared to me rather wanton slaughter destroying giraffe, as neither difficulty nor danger attended their chase. They are of every shade of colour from very dark brown to yellow, varying according to sex and age, but the markings or blotches of light colour on them all, seem to be very nearly identical. An old bull is of a deep dark brown, an old cow is a sort of dark yellowish brown, and the younger ones are of a light brown with almost a shade of purple in it. They are seldom seen in companies of more than eight or twelve at a time, and two or three together are far more commonly met with than any larger numbers.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Rain sets in—"Cricket" is lost—Blue Wildebeeste—A wounded Bull—The Boys "tree'd"—A pleasant Camp—Iguana—A black Rhinoceros—The Martini-Henry—Wild Pig—The Boys return—"Cricket's" Death—Tsetse Fly.

SMALL clouds had appeared in the usually clear sky during the afternoon, which had gradually become blacker and bigger as evening approached, and soon we had not to think about where we should get water for the night, and be able to make camp, as a slow drizzling shower commenced, and made us wish to get under shelter. We soon found a convenient spot, and lost no time in stretching out our tent over the still dry ground under the far-spreading branches of a large mimosa growing from the top of a mound, which had kept the wet out like an umbrella. Just as we had succeeded in lighting a fire with the already damp wood, the long-collected storm burst upon us, and poured down a pelting, pitiless deluge, which soon put out our fires, and made us take refuge in the small tent, and there eat in a despondent mood our almost raw supper; and although raw meat may be very digestible, we did not find it very pleasant to the taste. The boys made up the best stable for my horse that circumstances would permit, and I put one of my blankets and a couple

of empty sacks over its back to keep it as warm as possible.

The boys themselves crouched round the trunk of the tree, and there managed to procure some shelter from the blinding tempest, erecting a kind of shed with branches, and wattling it with grass and twigs. Our little tent kept out the wet perfectly, and a trench dug round the sides carried away all the drippings. It was impossible to have any fires, so we had to trust to chance that no lions came our way, and that the rain would make them feel inclined to keep dry at home. Woodward and I lay down side by side, and were soon fast asleep. We were rudely awakened, however, by a crashing, snorting, and thumping outside, and on looking out of the tent we discovered that my horse had broken the double rims which tied it, and made its escape. The cause of its alarm was not hard to discover, for a growl proceeding out of the darkness, which seemed to fill the whole air, sent us both back with a bound to the protection of the tent, as we could not see a yard in front of us, and were unable to fire; but we knew that the lion would not spring at a great white thing, the nature of which he was ignorant of. It was perfectly useless to think of attempting to seek my horse that night, as not a boy would have moved away from the others, even if there had been any light to search for it by. We heard distant roars, which probably proceeded from some more lions pursuing my poor horse. A shot or two fired on chance into the darkness soon drove off the one who seemed inclined to investigate our camp, but all

through the remainder of the long uncomfortable night we heard occasional growls too near to be pleasant. At the very first streak of dawn, although it was still pouring with rain, we set off on the spoor of the horse, which we could now easily follow in the soft muddy soil. For some five or six miles we followed it up along the identical trek we had come the previous day. A lion had been after it the whole distance that we tracked its spoor ; but at the point we left off the lion had evidently had enough of it too, for its spoor showed that it had pulled up, and after walking round several times in a circle, made off in another direction. We returned to camp draggled, dreary, and despondent ; but a lull in the rain-storm, and a glimpse of sun showing out, warmed our bodies and cheered up our spirits. It was a difficult task to get the fire to burn, but we had providentially covered up a little fuel when the storm first came on, and when this once blazed the heat soon dried enough fresh wood to make a fire large enough to cook our breakfast at.

We held a council of war, to which we called in the assistance of Jacob and a couple of the more intelligent of the boys. By their advice we picked out two of the other boys, gave them a rifle apiece with ammunition and provisions for a week, and sent them off on the spoor of the lost horse, with instructions to follow it up, even if it had returned to the wag-gons, but on no account to return without it, and if dead to bring its skin ; which directions left them no loophole of escape from rigidly obeying our orders. When we had seen the boys off, Woodward and I,

each accompanied by a boy, started off in opposite directions to hunt the neighbouring country; but towards noon the storm recommenced, and we both returned to the camp about the same time, drenched to our skins, cold, and disappointed, as we had neither of us come across a living animal of any description, neither had we discovered any recent-looking spoor. The rain continued in the steady deluge of water that only tropical countries experience, and soon everything was swimming around us. The tent luckily kept out any wet from above, but the ground underneath gradually became very spongy and damp. After eating some pieces of meat which had remained over in the frying-pan from our breakfast, we turned in between the blankets, and did our best to forget our discomforts in slumber. My dreams all night were of floods, shipwrecks, and inundations, and I was hardly a pleasant sleeping companion for Woodward, as my struggles, he assured me next morning, were most violent to escape my fancied watery grave. We both woke up with severe colds, and for a week afterwards our voices were like ravens', and we regretted that we had no tallow candles to rub on our noses. The rain continued all the next day without a moment's intermission, and as it was out of the question to attempt hunting, as we could not see fifty yards distance in the blinding downpour, we just stayed where we were, huddled up in our tiny tent, the atmosphere in which had now become like that of a Turkish bath. Just as evening was setting in the wind veered round to north, and presently the black

clouds cleared off, and the sun came out just in time to set upon a clear fine sky. All the firewood, however, was now so thoroughly soaked that we were unable to raise sufficient fire to cook any meat ; but we managed to boil a billy of coffee by means of the grass which had formed our beds, and been kept somewhat drier under the protection of the tent. Just as the light was leaving us a troop of blue wildebeeste appeared through the bushes, quite close to the camp ; and by great luck, in the uncertain light, I managed to kill one of them, which came in very opportunely, as our larder was almost empty.

A red sky at evening had led us to expect a fine day on the morrow, and we were not disappointed, for the sun rose brilliantly and soon dried up all the moisture from the ground and trees, and drove away all the damp mists and vapours.

We were not long in getting all the boys loaded, and striking our camp. Before leaving the boys placed sticks and pieces of grass in various positions to explain to the two who had been sent after the horse that we had moved on, still in search of game, and pointing out the direction we intended to take. Within a very few miles we crossed and recrossed the constant spoor of giraffe, buffalo, blue wildebeeste, and an occasional rhinoceros and lion ; but although there must have been abundance of game all round, we never came across any the whole day through, and had to make our dinner off the blue wildebeeste of the previous evening.

Next day we again fell in with buffalo, and were successful in killing a couple of fine bulls ; but as the

bush was very thick, and the country covered with huge boulders of rocks, the herd managed to get clear away without giving us another chance, so it was not a very exciting day's sport. We followed up their spoor again next morning; but, warned by their lesson of the night before, they kept a better look-out, and were off on two occasions when we had stalked up to them, before letting us get a shot. Discouraged, but not beaten, we kept steadily on their spoor. As we were quietly following it along, suddenly the bushes opened to our right, and a splendid bull buffalo dashed out and crossed in front of us. We gave him the benefit of our two rifles, but neither bullet stopped him, and on he went crashing through the thorns. Several of the boys were after him at full speed, while we followed them at a more leisurely pace. After a long tramp one of the boys came back with the intelligence that the wounded bull had hidden himself in some tall reeds growing in the broad channel of a dried-up slood. The shouts of the boys told us the direction we were to follow; but when we had arrived on the high banks, although the shouts seemed close to and all round us, not a single boy was anywhere to be seen, and it was not for some time we perceived that the boys, in their infinite terror of the wounded "inyati," had forsaken their native element, and taken, like so many monkeys, to the protection of the trees. From their lofty hiding-places they all at once yelled out their advice to us to do likewise, and also informed us of the whereabouts of the buffalo.

We fired several shots into the reeds, and threw

numberless stones, without eliciting any response from the wounded beast. As we could not waste all the day in waiting for it to die or come out, Woodward and I determined to make our way close together through the reeds and find it. The boys looked on in horror at what they thought our foolhardiness, but we knew that the beast was wounded badly, and trusted that one of us would kill it, even if the other missed. We had great difficulty in forcing our passage through the long, sharp sword-reeds, and received many severe cuts and scratches on our way; but we had the satisfaction of coming across the buffalo at his last gasp, and another bullet knocked it over as it attempted to rise preparatory to making a last charge.

The boys would not forsake their leafy retreats until they were well assured that the enemy was vanquished, by seeing us emerge from the reeds with its tail. Instantly thereupon they slipped down, and were soon up to their elbows wallowing in the warm blood. The horns were so fine that we determined to preserve them; so, much to one of the boy's disgust, we insisted upon his carrying them, and distributed his former, but now reduced load, of provisions amongst the other boys. On our way back to camp we killed another cow, and a young one too, which proved a most welcome change of diet. There is as much difference between a young cow and any other buffalo as between a heron and a woodcock. The former is only eaten out of necessity, but the latter is a most toothsome delicacy, and equal in flavour to the very finest

venison from any forest in Scotland or park in England.

We made our camp for the night by the only good water we had tasted for a couple of months, and there was almost an unlimited supply of it.

It was discovered more by chance than anything else, as none of the boys had any knowledge of our present neighbourhood, and it did not look a likely place. Several acres of ground were covered thickly with large ragged rocks, piled up one above the other. On the chance of coming across a panther or lion, we were climbing over them, and in the very centre came upon a little open sandy space, on two sides of which, deep down to the foundation of the rocks, were two clear pools of water, one of them not less than six feet deep, and evidently supplied by a spring. We indulged in the luxury of a bathe in the deeper pool, leaving the other of equally pure and good water for the drinking and cooking supplies. We took the opportunity of thoroughly washing our shirts, &c., and for several hours our costumes were as simple and natural as that of the boys themselves. While we were bathing, a large iguana made his appearance on the side of the rock we were sitting on; but after observing us with suspicion for some seconds, he waddled off leisurely. We jumped out of the water, snatched up a couple of the boy's assegais, and set off in pursuit.

The iguana changed its dawdling crawl to quick darts, which carried it along far faster than we could have followed up if it had been on the level. It would have undoubtedly escaped as it was, for

the rocks cut our feet at every step, and prevented our getting along very fast; but, unfortunately for the silly creature, a slit between two rocks tempted it to seek its protection; and from there it had no means of escape, as with our slender assegais we were easily able to reach it. We soon succeeded in despatching it, and had more difficulty in pulling out the body, but were successful with the boys' assistance; on measurement, it proved to be a very large iguana, being nearly seven feet from tip of tongue to tip of tail. The boys skinned it and made pouches out of the rough hide, but they did not waste the body, which was soon roasting on their sticks. I tried the flesh and found it very palatable indeed, hardly to be distinguished from chicken, only a little richer and more succulent. Every hour we expected to hear the shouts of our boys returning with the horse, as they had now been absent from us six days. We had very little hope of seeing the horse itself again, and if it was brought back we knew it would now be valueless, as the unfortunately-timed rain would have finished the work of the tsetse fly. Darkness came on without any signs of them, and we turned in rather anxious as to their safety.

We had more trouble with lions than we had ever before experienced during the night. As our camp was some little distance from the wood, the boys had been lazy, and had not brought up nearly sufficient fuel. Several lions commenced prowling round outside the camp early in the evening, so the boys made up huge fires, and were continually throwing burning brands out into the darkness to keep them at a

respectful distance. We ourselves went to sleep as usual, knowing that the boys would be quite certain to keep the fires up without our assistance. Between two and three the boys awoke us with their yells, and begged us to get up and fire our guns, as they declared there were dozens of lions standing all round and glaring at them. The firewood was all exhausted, and the fires were just expiring. The growls certainly sounded very close to us indeed, and we lost no time in firing off our rifles in the directions they proceeded from, but without doing the lions any damage. It was of no use our attempting again to go to sleep, as the boys roused us up at once with fresh terrors. The air of the early morning was very cold and raw, so we were very glad to see the sun rising above the trees, and to feel its cheering rays. No amount of fire warms one like the sun, or so soon takes out the stiffness and cramp arising from lying upon the cold, damp ground.

To give the boys who had been sent after the horse another chance of coming up with us, we remained where we were for the day, and not at all unwillingly, as the abundant supply of water, with the unexpected opportunity of bathing, held out irresistible attractions.

During the day Woodward and I went off with a couple of the boys to try and find the buffalo again. While we were following up the spoor of a small herd, a black rhinoceros came bustling through the bushes quite close to us, but went on, apparently not even inconvenienced by the two shots we had at it. Not having any horse, it was useless to follow it up,

so we continued after the buffalo. The spoor of the small herd we were following joined into the spoor of a larger one after we had tracked it for some distance, and soon afterwards we sighted the whole of them, feeding in among the trees. The wind was behind us, so we had to make a very long circuit round. While we were doing this the herd moved forward unperceived by us, and we suddenly came face to face with their leaders quite unexpectedly. Instead of charging forward at us, as I had been led to expect they would do under the circumstances, the whole herd wheeled quickly round and beat a retreat, with their tails flying over their backs, and such a stamping and snorting that we heard them half a mile away. One of their number, however, was left on the ground *hors de combat*, with a Martini-Henry bullet through him. It had entered on the left side, through the fleshy part of the hind-quarter, and, piercing all the entrails, had made its exit clean through the right shoulder, smashing the bone into splinters. It was the best instance of the crushing penetration and force of the Martini-Henry that I ever saw. An old bull had also been severely wounded, but had followed on behind the herd, not delayed by several shots we fired at its hind-quarters. We followed up the spoor for about a mile, and had just passed through some very thick thorns, when the boys gave an agonized shout, and bounded past us for their lives. Instantly facing round to see the cause, we just had time to spring aside, and let the old bull we had wounded, and who had taken shelter behind a clump of thorns, charge past us; and I

gave him another bullet right through the belly as he passed. The now mad brute wheeled round again, but we were both safe behind the trunks of trees. For an instant the bull stood still, glaring round with his blood-shot eyes and frothy mouth; then, perceiving me, he made a rush straight at the trunk which protected my body; but he had to pass within a yard of Woodward, who, with his muzzle almost touching the animal's shoulder, put a bullet into his heart, and it dropped dead right against my tree. There were seven bullet-wounds in its carcase; three of the bullets had passed right through, and the other four were embedded in the flesh of the hind-quarters. Covering the body up, we set out for the camp, so as to send back the boys for meat. On our way, a herd of wild pigs trotted leisurely out of the reeds, as we walked through a dry slood. As I wanted a new ammunition-pouch, we bowled over a fine fat hog, whose skin made excellent material for belts or pouches when well cleansed and greased. The hog had a splendid pair of tusks, but as we had no hatchet with us we were unable to cut them out of its head. The wild pigs here, as elsewhere, were all covered over with lice and other vermin, which made them very disagreeable beasts to carry about. The only way to utilize their flesh is to tear a strip of skin off the whole length of the backbone, and then to cut out long V-shaped slices on both sides of it. The boys had quite lost their calculations as to the direction of the camp, and led us a very long roundabout tramp before at last declaring that they had no idea where we were,

or which road to take. It was long past noon, and we were feeling seriously uneasy, when one of them some distance off recognized a clump of trees we had passed on the preceding day. When this was reached we were able to find our own spoor, and, following it up, soon reached the camp, but not before the sun had gone down, and only just in time to avoid passing a night out. Nothing had been seen or heard of the other two boys, much to my disappointment, as every day's hunting showed me more and more the necessity of having a horse to make sure of running down wounded game. The boys had spent their day in making huge piles of firewood, so as not to have our rest disturbed as on the previous night. They had also killed a very large boa-constrictor, nearly eighteen feet long, which had been crawling about right inside the limits of our camp. It was too late to send out after the meat of the buffaloes we had killed, and as there was plenty in camp it made no difference. When the boys went next morning for the meat, they found two lions eating the old bull, so they were afraid to interfere, and came back in great haste to let us know of it; but when we arrived on the spot the robbers had taken themselves off. They had utterly destroyed the buffalo, mauling and tearing what parts they had not eaten. In the afternoon we made a twelve-miles march to the south, and camped very near the line of our route in coming. I shot a pig with remarkably fine tusks while the boys were making up the fires, &c., and instantly another gun was fired off at some distance in answer to the dis-

charge of my rifle. Our boys at once put it down to what it was—the two boys returning, and very soon they made their appearance, guided by the shouts from our camp and an occasional discharge of a rifle. There was no horse with them, but instead they had brought its skin, still quite moist and fresh. They had followed the horse along the trek we had come, straight back to camp; and the boys assured us that the horse had never stopped for sleep or food over the whole distance of sixty or seventy miles, until it found itself on its accustomed feeding-ground close to the waggons. They had rested twelve hours at the waggons, and had then started off with it; but the effect of the cold rain became more plain every hour. By the end of the first day's tramp the horse could hardly get forward at all. Next morning they had great difficulty in raising it up, and had been obliged to trek very slowly, and give the horse every opportunity of resting. The third day it seemed a little better, and they had made a long march; but the next morning it had absolutely refused to move at all till the sun had been up some time and warmed its poor diseased bones. The next day it had suddenly fallen down dead as it was being led slowly along; and, according to their instructions, the boys had skinned it, and brought the hide as a sign of their obedience.

There were large discoloured blotches scattered all over the inside of the skin, and the boys described the body as having been diseased all over in the parts where the skin was discoloured. Its bones were all showing through the skin, and it had lost all

its strength and appetite before it died. The hair on the dry skin was rough, and standing the wrong way. I was sorry not to have myself seen the body of the horse, and so to have had more accurate information, and to have been able to see the exact nature of the diseased places, and how deeply they penetrated, as also the condition of the blood and stomach, and possibly to discover in what the tsetse fly differs from the other species of poisonous insects.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Provisions run short—The last Buffalo—No Water—Thirst—Tongas—The Waggon again—All safe—Koodoo—A long Ride—Crevicing—Russell's Store—A Digger's Quarters—Diggers at Home—Frozen in Bed.

THE boys brought most reassuring news from the waggons. Oxen and horses were all doing well, and had much improved in appearance since the rain had caused the grass to shoot up and afford them good feeding. The boys left in charge, although very anxious for our return, had not had any trouble with strange Kaffirs, and had been successful in killing several quagga and blue wildebeeste, so they had not run short of meat, which would prevent their becoming discontented. We were now already beyond the time we had counted on as being absent from the waggons, and our supplies of provisions were all at a very low ebb, some—including the sugar and coffee, and gin—were entirely run out. We had killed so many buffalo, and such quantities of other game, that the first excitement had passed off; and as we had no means of transporting their skins to the waggon, it was very useless slaughter.

Now, too, the last chance of again having back my horse, which would give me very greatly increased facilities of running down rhinoceros or

hunting lions, was gone, and all the hunting would have to be done on foot.

Taking all these reasons into consideration, we determined to start back at once on the homeward journey. The boys were delighted when they heard our determination, as they had begun to fancy that we were taking them on and on to certain destruction by tribes they knew nothing of, or had only heard wild fables concerning their predatory habits.

Next morning the boys were up early of their own accord, and stepped out more briskly, and lagged less behind, than any day since we started.

While we were enjoying our mid-day rest under some cool leafy trees by the side of a small slout which contained an occasional pool of green slimy water, Jacob, who had been prowling all round in search of spoor, came hurriedly back with the news that a herd of buffalo were making straight along the banks of the slout for our resting-place. In an instant we had hidden ourselves in the high reeds, and were awaiting their approach. I took the left-hand bank, and Woodward the right. We had not long to wait before the buffaloes, some forty or fifty in number, appeared slowly walking along, feeding as they came, and on my side of the slout. As if from sheer contrariness, a slight wind, which would have been most welcome during our hot march of the morning, now sprang up behind us. I was in hopes the herd would come within shot before they had time to scent our presence, but it was not to be. The foremost old bull pricked up his ears, and stood stock still, with his nostrils in the air, drawing in at

every breath a deeper suspicion that there was danger about.

Two others came up and joined him, and seemed to form a committee of investigation ; for, leaving the old fellow where he was, they proceeded very suspiciously a hundred yards nearer, which brought them within about four hundred yards. There they stopped for an instant ; and then, possibly catching sight of one of the Kaffirs, who had not concealed himself sufficiently, or who was incautiously looking out, the pair wheeled round and rejoined the herd. I had put up my rifle, meaning to fire as they turned round, but did not, on the chance of their still coming on ; but it was a vain piece of prudence, for the whole herd now turned off and disappeared at a gallop into the bush, and although we followed for some distance we were unable to again come within sight of them. We started off on our march, and tramped steadily on for several hours, without coming across any sign of water. It was to no purpose that we sent the boys out in every direction, as evening approached, to find either a water-hole or patch of reeds where we might dig one. The sun went down upon us still thirsty, and with no prospect of drink. Another mile or two we dragged on, stumbling over stones, branches, and thorns in the dim light ; but at last we could proceed no further, for we could not see a yard ahead of us, and the boys were almost crying with dread of lions. We lighted our fires and prepared for the night ; but the meat we ate only made the pangs of thirst more insufferable. Twelve hours does not sound very

long to go without water; but no one who has not experienced it has any conception of the real pain such a forced abstinence occasions, especially in a broiling sun and working hard. Next morning we did not delay for breakfast, but started off the moment there was light, our only thoughts being to find water.

We had on the previous day crossed the trek we had made coming in, and we now turned slightly out of our direct line home to find a water-hole we had passed, and which we expected to find full; but, to our intense disappointment, the game had been beforehand with us, and there was not a single drop in the basin. The next likely place was another ten miles further on; and as we had now been twenty-four hours without a single drop of moisture passing our lips, and in that time had walked some thirty miles, we felt that our case was really becoming serious. Our mouths and lips were all blistered and bleeding, our throats smarted with dryness, and our tongues were parched and cracked. It was of no use complaining, and off we set again, but rather feebly, for the sun was beating down his fiercest rays upon us, and making our sufferings intense. It seemed the longest ten miles I ever walked, although we were only a little over three hours in accomplishing the distance. The last quarter of a mile before we came to the sloot in which were the reeds at the bottom of which we expected to find our water was the longest bit of all, for thick thorns and reeds impeded our progress, and made it very difficult work moving forward at all. Jacob, taking the

spade from the boy who usually carried it, was the quickest; and before we were half way through, his shouts announced that he had begun digging, and that he could tell from the reeds that water was there. When we arrived at the slood he had already made a hole a couple of feet deep in the sand, and the black mud soon after showed; gradually the water oozed out, and, with more delight and eagerness than ever iced champagne was drunk, we scooped up handfuls of the mud, and sucked out the moisture through our fingers, while waiting for a pool to form in the bottom of our hole. In half an hour quite a nice pool had collected, and we drank time after time of the cool, but thick and nasty-looking stuff, until we could drink no more, although still feeling thirsty. To prevent the large quantity of water on empty stomachs making us ill, we had a fire lighted, and proceeded to cook breakfast at once, for thirst had prevented our eating earlier.

We stayed by the pool until the sun was very low in the heavens, not liking to leave the vicinity of the water; but as we were sure of more for the night, we at length started off to do another trek before sleeping. I do not think that there is any more delightful sensation possible for a man to conceive than the first trickling of water over his parched palate when he has been for over twenty-four hours deprived of it. During our next day's journey we came upon a party of Amatongas who were out on a hunting expedition, but they had not been at all successful, and were very grateful for the body of a quagga which I shot and presented to them. They were

wretchedly armed; only two had muskets, and the others carried nothing but assegais. The two muskets were muzzle-loading, and the barrels made of some metal resembling tin, and not much more durable.

The Amatongas, or Tongas, occupy a strip of country covering a hundred miles, south of Delagoa Bay, and having indefinite northern boundaries. Their neighbours on the west are the Swazis, who being a strong and brave tribe, keep their weaker brethren in a state of constant fear and trembling. The Tongas are remarkable among all other tribes from their horribly mutilated and disfigured countenances. When young the flesh of the cheek-bones and forehead is slashed and cut in parallel lines; and as they grow older, and the horrible wounds are cicatrized over, they attain the most repulsive appearance imaginable. In stature they are as a rule moderately fine men, but in character they are notoriously cowards and thieves. The party we met were absolutely nude. The only attempt at clothes being a band for putting cartridges in, worn over the left shoulders of the two who carried rifles, and who were probably petty chiefs or indunas to be possessed of such coveted distinctions.

Late in the evening of our next day's trek we again passed Hart's Station, and made our camp for the night a short distance beyond it. If possible, I should have liked to push on to the waggons; for, besides the feeling of anxiety as to their safety, the prolonged absence from them made me feel quite

eager to be back again, and enjoy the comforts of being at home. So many months constant living in my waggon, had inclined me to invest it with many of the feelings of a real home, as indeed it was. It is a very common saying in South Africa, that if a man once gets into the way of waggon life, and learns to enjoy its monotonous existence, he will never settle down to any other mode of life; and that although for a time he may leave it and take to another occupation, yet the longing for the old life will prove too strong for him, and a few years will find him once more "upon the trek." We finished our breakfast next morning, which happened to be Sunday, before the sun was risen, and then Woodward and I started off to walk the twelve miles, leaving the boys to follow along as slowly as they pleased. When we arrived the lazy drivers were still soundly sleeping, but the foreloupers had let the oxen out of the kraal, and had untied the horses, which were all grazing within sight. Our first attention was paid to these, and off we strolled to inspect them. Only one casualty had happened during our absence; one of the oxen in my span had received a rather severe wound in its hind-quarters, from the horn of another ox. The flies had settled on the raw place, and had caused great inflammation to set in. The boys were quite helpless, and it had never crossed their minds even to attempt any healing measures. We lost no time in having the ox driven in, bathing the wound in warm water until all the filth was thoroughly cleansed from it, and the inflammation had somewhat subsided, and then put on some cooling

healing ointment chiefly composed of lard and zinc, which we found most efficacious in preventing wounds inclined to be inflamed from festering, whether on man or beast. Where cold-water bandages can be kept on, there is no more sure healing process; and I have seen most horrible cuts and broken bruises join or be closed over in a very few days under the plain cold-water treatment. There may often, however, be a difficulty in obtaining water pure enough to bathe a wound with, and in that case the zinc ointment will be almost as useful.

On carefully overhauling the waggon, not a single article of any description—ammunition, food, or knick-knacks—was found wanting, and I do not believe that one of the boys had either appropriated or eaten any article which did not belong to them of right. As a reward for their fidelity we presented each one with some little present. Jantze was made perfectly happy with a very broad and gorgeous cord and leather ammunition-belt, which A. had left behind, and the other boys each received some article of cast-off wearing-apparel. The day was spent in preparing the waggons for a start on the morrow, as we had determined not to linger where we were, as there was no object to be gained, no large game being in the vicinity; and as we were quite ignorant of what had taken place in relation with the Kaffirs for the last three months, we might by staying longer where we were be exposing ourselves to unnecessary risk of losing our oxen and waggons, and very probably our lives into the bargain. We decided on taking the waggons back by

the most direct route, in fact that which had formerly been used by the carrying company of which the ill-fated Hart was a servant. It had become a matter of importance to me to receive letters; so as W. had no objection to take sole charge of the waggons into Leydenburg, not now distant more than a week's journey with the fresh and fat oxen, I made up my mind to take the best horse I had, which had been left behind with the waggons, and ride in by myself. To Spitz Kop by the nearest road, it was only seventy-five miles, which I could do in one day by making an early start. There I could stay the night, and easily ride on to Leydenburg next day, as it was not more than twenty-eight or thirty miles distant, on horseback. While outspanned from our first trek we settled up with all the boys who had accompanied us hunting, and then dismissed them, giving some small present to each. To one a "Bushman's Friend," as the cheap open-bladed knives are designated, which are chiefly used for skinning and killing game, and any other rough purpose. Another was made the proud possessor of a many-coloured handkerchief; and others carried off with them lengths of brass wire, Kaffir picks, lumps of lead, strings of beads, and other valuables of a like nature, according to their own choice and selection.

There was not a discontented soul amongst them when they set off, some returning to Delagoa Bay, others to their various kraals situated in all parts of the Sabie Valley. We retained in our service Jacob and one other only, who had been nicknamed Sar-sapi by the boys, for some reason known only to

themselves. Jacob still occupied the same position as my especial body-servant, and the other assisted with the oxen. Both boys we chose on account of their readiness to work, and the signs they had shown of courage.

While the waggon was slowly trekking along I took a circuit round Pretorius Kop, Jacob with me, in search of game, as our larder had almost run out. On the far side we passed into a country more sparsely dotted with small clumps of thorns, and my boy was not long in pointing out to me a fine pair of koodoo horns rising above the top of a low bush. Advancing cautiously we discovered that there were a male and two females in company. Dismounting from my horse, and leaving him at a distance, I followed Jacob, who glided along through the grass like a serpent; and although he was encumbered with my rifle, he managed to get along quicker than I could comfortably follow. We succeeded in creeping up to within a couple of hundred yards of the bôk before they became aware that danger was near. But it was too late for them to profit by their knowledge; for while the male was sniffing the air, and looking suspiciously in our direction, I had an easy shot, and knocked him over with a bullet right in the centre of his chest, which penetrated half way through the length of his body. The koodoo, or kudu has, the finest horns of any bôk in Africa, with the exception of the sable antelope or lion-killer. The horns are very thick and heavy, and are often three and a half feet in length, but their beauty lies in their spiral shape. They often complete two circles, the tips

turning outwards and forwards. The bôk itself is often five feet high at the shoulder, and from eight to ten feet from tip to tip; its colour is reddish-grey, with a tinge of purple running through when the sun shines on it and the hairs glisten. It has three white spots on each cheek, and a white chin. The bôk I killed was almost full-grown, but had not such fine horns as I had previously seen. The meat is rather dry and insipid, so I was very glad of the opportunity of killing a couple of pheasants which appeared close to the waggon soon after I rejoined it. The African pheasant bears not the most distant resemblance to any other pheasant, and indeed has no proper scientific connexion with it at all. It is really a large species of partridge, but has the one peculiarity of the pheasant, that it generally roosts in trees or on bushes. It was the last night we were to spend together outside civilization, but to keep up our spirits we had a most excellent dinner.

Steaks of koodoo, broiled pheasants, marrow-bones, boiled rice and peaches, all flavoured with the same but most relishing of all sauces—the sauce of hunger—formed a repast which any gourmet might well envy our enjoyment of. The horse I was to ride had all the crushed mealies given it would eat, to fortify it for the long journey of the morrow over rough and hilly country.

I tied up on the back of my saddle a blanket, in case of accidents and having to sleep out, and put a few necessaries in the saddle-bag, including a tin pannikin, either to drink from or cook in. In the morning there was nothing to delay me; so after a

hearty breakfast I said good-bye to Woodward, and set off with my rifle over my shoulder, and, as a precautionary measure, I put my revolver on my holster, and took a supply of ammunition for both. The trek lay between high tambooti grass on each side, and in many places I had difficulty in finding it out. About ten o'clock I arrived at Sand River, which here runs over a rocky bed, through a very pretty valley well covered with dark green bush and many-coloured cacti and creepers. In the crevices of the rocks laying in the channel of this stream large quantities of gold have been found, but it has now been thoroughly worked out by adventurous gold-seekers. Creviceing is far the most pleasant form of all gold-mining, and is occasionally very paying indeed. The particles of gold washed out of the crumbling sides of the stream, or collected into the flood from the top soil of the land below the banks—when the rivers burst out of their proper courses, swollen by heavy rains—gradually sink to the bottom of the surging mass of mud and water, as it tears downward, and, whirled hither and thither by the force of the water upon the rocky bottom, at last find a safe resting-place in the many cracks and crevices between the rocks. In the dry season, when there is little water in the stream, the creviceer carries on his operations, and carefully cleans out these deposits of small stones, sand, and gold-dust. By means of a wash-pan, the gold, if there be any, is soon separated from its worthless accompaniment.

Occasionally the rift in the rock is so deep that the miner finds it necessary to blast the rock, but he

takes care not to blast deep enough to let the current sweep out the bottom layers of the contents, for in them all the most valuable particles of gold, being the heaviest, will sure to have their hiding-place.

At Sand River I stayed long enough to give my horse a drink of water, and ungirthed the saddle to give him a breather. On the top of the hill, above the river, I came upon a party of our boys, who were returning home to their kraal near the Sabie Falls. Their cheerful "Amba gashly, amba gashly," the usual mode of parting salutation, meaning "Go gently or peaceably," rang upon my ears—a very welcome sound in the huge still solitude—and gave the road a more cheerful aspect in my eyes. It was past noon when I pulled up at Witwater River, and then, after first carefully looking all round, in case of any Kaffirs being about, I off-saddled my horse upon the top of a broad open grassy knoll, where it could find some pickings of nice fresh young grass. In half-an-hour I again put the saddle on, for I had still at least twenty-five miles to go, and it was nearly two o'clock. My horse, refreshed by the rest and feed, now cantered over the next ten or twelve miles very briskly, and before long I was at the foot of the Berg, two miles from the summit of which Spitz Kop is situated. The ascent, nearly two miles in distance from the necessary curving of the path, took me over an hour, and my horse was showing symptoms of being "fagged," when at length we were on the top, and Spitz Kop stood out clear in front. I made straight for the foot of the Kop, round which the direct road runs to the little digger township,

and very nearly came to grief by the attempted short cut, as my horse was bogged in some swampy ground, and it was with great difficulty that I was able to extricate it. Once on the road—which is a good one for such an out-of-the-way place—I was a very short time in covering the three miles into the township, and pulled up at the door of Harry Russell's store just at five o'clock. I was at once bidden to off-saddle and make myself at home, which I was not at all loth to do after my seventy odd miles' ride over rough country. Russell could not boast of very superior accommodation, but the hearty welcome to the best he could provide made up for all else. I was very eager for news, but he had none but bad to give me. Rumours of fighting, and cattle being lifted, were rife from all parts of the country, and the inhabitants of Spitz Kōp were themselves seriously uneasy about their personal safety.

My host's sleeping-room and *salle-à-manger* were both in one, and, as a specimen of the life men are obliged to live who seek for gold in a country far off from any civilization, I will attempt to describe it as accurately as I can remember. The walls were built half-way up of mud and stones, and the upper portions were of boards which had evidently been brought up in the form of boxes containing provisions. The room was about eight feet long by five broad, and the top of the thatched roof about seven feet high. At one end was the door, composed of two lids of boxes nailed together. The window at the other end was simply constructed by knocking a square hole out of the wall, which, in wet or severe weather,

could be closed up by fixing a piece of board in front of it. There was no attempt at paving of any description. In the centre of the room, upon four uprights stuck into the floor, was nailed the lid of another box; and this served as table. In like manner, on each side of it, were constructed two seats, one broader than the other, which served as a bed. Adjoining the door stood a box on its side, with the lid upon hinges, which served for a cupboard, as well as a side-table, and facing it stood a cask of spirits; and piled on the top of it was a miscellaneous collection of saddles, mining tools, riding and driving gear, a few books, clothes, medicines, potatoes, boots, and fifty other odd articles of daily use. On the walls were nailed various pictures from *Punch*, the *London Illustrated News*, and the *Graphic*. Under the table was a sack of oranges, and trodden into the floor, and littering it up, were the remains of many meals, mixed up with plugs of tobacco, eggshells, orange-skins, broken pipes, pieces of paper, shavings, and drawn corks. The table itself was covered completely, and piled high with dirty plates, tins, knives, spoons, and forks, two candles stuck into weights for the scales, Worcestershire sauce, and preserved milk, a tin of Keating's Persian insect powder, and a half empty pot of marmalade. The frying-pan with the remains of breakfast, balanced on the top of a bottle of pickles, and sugar, pepper, and mustard, all held in tins or pots intended for other purposes. The waggon had often presented a scene of confusion, but such utter chaos as there was in this room it had never before been my lot to come across.

I very eagerly fell in with my host's suggestion that we should have our tea at once, and presently a boy appeared with a frizzling frying-pan full of most tempting slices off a leg of pork, and a kettle full of tea. From the cupboard a new loaf of very well baked bread was produced, and—luxury of luxuries—a supply of most excellent salt butter. Our tea despatched, we adjourned to the store adjoining, where by degrees nearly all the miners collected, and I was introduced to each one as he came in. Although spirits and beer are kept in the store, none is ever sold in the evening; but if a man wants a glass, he can always take one for nothing. By this wise precaution there is never any overdrinking of a night, and consequently no quarrelling. The store is frequented by those who wish for a little society and gossip, but who yet do not wish to visit the canteen, where they will be obliged to drink whether they wish for it or no, just for the good of the house.

In no part of the world have I ever seen such an assemblage, drawn from such various and wide apart elements of society, as were collected in the little store. Not more than a score in all, there were representatives of England, Scotland, and Ireland, an American and two Australians, a Frenchman, German, and Swede, more than one whose nationality no one could define, a Jew and a Spaniard. Although all were dressed in the same coarse mole-skin trousers, thick woollen jerseys, and stout rough coats, several at once attracted my attention as evidently having been accustomed to vastly dif-

ferent modes of life. Several games of euchre and monte were played during the evening on the counter, which served as table and settee; but no gambling of any sort took place, and the highest stake played for was a pair of new hob-nailed boots. Russell himself was briskly occupied at times in serving out supplies to various customers who looked in. An ox was to be killed on the morrow, so each man put down his name for so many pounds from whatever part he especially fancied. A digger's store has to keep a large assortment of goods, and the shelves of the small room were filled with the most incongruous articles. In one division were preserved milk, boot-laces, and castor-oil. Next to it came two babies' bonnets, several coils of fuse, pots of pickles, and carbolic acid soap. The latter is the only soap used by diggers, as it serves to keep their hands from chapping and blistering, either from the intense heat or severe cold. A large box of newly arrived boots was in one corner, and in the other were kept the barrels of Cape brandy and pontac. Digging tools of every description lined the walls, and the ceiling was festooned with rows of cups, basins, plates and jugs. Tin ware of all descriptions was mixed up with dried onions and frying-pans. A great deal of very rough chaff was carried on between the visitors to the store, but there was not much wit in it; and if there had been, the foul language it was wrapped up in would have prevented it being amusing. I had often heard that a digging was the worst place in the world for bad language, but I was not even then prepared for the reality.

Most horrible oaths are used, not at all as opprobrious epithets, but merely as endearing familiarities.

Store-keepers at diggings have better times when the diggers are only doing moderately well, than when the gold is being found in quantities. If a digger is only making his five or six pounds a week, he thinks "What is the use of saving the little I can out of this ; I had better spend this, and wait for the good time coming to make my pile;" and, acting on this principle, expends every farthing he makes. When, however, he is making his twenty pounds a week, he strives to live as economically as possible, and thus lay by enough to make his required fortune and leave the diggings.

No stores are paid for with ready-money. Bills are delivered on the last Saturday of every month, and they are expected to be paid on the following Monday. Gold dust is taken instead of coin, at a fair price ; for although it is some five or six shillings below the Mint price in England, yet the gold often contains so much dirt and particles of quartz that the buyer loses over the transaction.

By ten o'clock the store was deserted, and I was quite ready to turn in. My bed was on one of the seats in the dining apartment, and Russell gave me out of the store a large supply of blankets, &c., and I had nothing to complain of. I felt the change in the atmosphere most severely, and was almost frozen during the night, in spite of the three blankets I had over me. On the preceding night the thermometer had never been below eighty degrees ; but at the high elevation I now was in there were ten degrees

of frost, and the ground in the morning was covered with white glistening hoar frost. When I awoke I was literally frozen, and for some minutes my limbs were so numbed that I was unable to move out of bed. The board had tumbled off the window, and a cold cutting draught had been blowing through and making the room like a refrigerator. The sun was up when I stepped outside, and soon put new life and warmth into me. My ablutions were performed in the stream running close to the door, and I indulged in a cold bath, much to the amusement of several diggers who passed by on the way to their various claims. I had ordered my letters forward on to Spitz Kop; so as the weekly mail was due at eleven o'clock I decided to wait and see if there were letters for me; as if I left any behind me, there was no knowing when I should see them again; and even if I did not leave till noon, I could still get into Leydenburg before dark. As luck would have it, the postman, a Kaffir, was this day unaccountably late, and never made his appearance until between four and five o'clock. There were no letters of any importance either for me, which made the delay all the more annoying, as it was of no use my attempting to ride into Leydenburg until next day. The news from the front—that is from the forces who were against Secocoeni—was as bad as it could well be. A troop of the Diamond-field Horse had lost nearly all their horses, which had been driven off by the Kaffirs, and that in broad daylight, while they looked on helpless to prevent it. Three forts had of necessity been evacuated, cattle had been lifted, and farms attacked,

in all directions. To make matters more immediately alarming, during the evening a farmer rode into the township with the intelligence that his own cattle had all been carried off only the previous day from his farm, some twelve or fifteen miles distant, and that pursuit had proved fruitless, for the thieves had made their escape with the spoil through the Sabie valley.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Stories of Boers—Curious Report—Back in Leydenburg—Cattle-Lifting—A false Alarm—A Ball—Off to the Front—Leydenburg Armoury—A long Trek.

THE diggers at Spitz Kop had some months previously made themselves a very substantial lager in the heart of the encampment, and had dug a deep trench round it, and altogether made a very efficient protection for themselves in case of attack. They had also organized a nightly patrol, who kept guard over the village, and kept the lager ready for immediate occupation. Their chief and most serious cause of alarm was the scarcity of fire-arms. In all, not above ten rifles and a dozen revolvers could be mustered together in case of attack. My rifle and revolver were very eagerly eyed by several; and I was induced to sell my rifle—which I did not much value, as I had seldom used it—at the same price it had cost in Natal. I could have obtained a higher price if I had asked it, or by taking it on with me to Leydenburg, but I only parted with the rifle to do what lay in my power in assisting them towards making an efficient defence in case of need. During the evening I again attended at the nightly gathering in the store, taking my seat upon a sack of potatoes. The talk turned upon the Boers and their ignorance of

anything outside their own farms, as well as their general thick-headedness in regard to any matters foreign to their own immediate occupation. One old digger, who had come from the Diamond Fields, had a fund of queer anecdotes and stories about them, which kept his audience in roars the whole evening, as his occasional words of Dutch gave them additional point.

Ten or twelve years ago a great meeting of Boers was called together in the Orange Free State, to discuss the question of introducing a line of telegraph through their State. A telegraph inspector had been sent for, who at great length, and in the clearest manner, demonstrated the mode of construction and advantages that would accrue to the Free State from the invention. The meeting listened most patiently to the explanations, but with many a muttered "*Almachte*," and occasional nods and winks of disbelief in the marvellous powers assigned to the telegraph. The explanation over, several members of the meeting proceeded to speak upon the subject, both in favour of and in opposition to it, and the meeting was almost evenly divided in opinion as to the advisability of the scheme. At last one aged and much revered father of the people arose, and with many scathing remarks on the short-sightedness and reckless running after new things which he observed in the young men of the state, proceeded to point out to them that the idea was quite impracticable. "Does not the proposer of the motion," said he, "put forward that one of the chief advantages of the scheme is that at all times and seasons

we shall be able to hear news from all parts of the other colonies as well as our own? Even supposing all this to be true, which I very much doubt, the deluded man has utterly forgotten the fact that even now the waggons have to cease from running during many months of the year, owing to the lack of water, and that therefore this telegraph would all die off from thirst before it had been started a month in the summer weather." The words of this Nestor were greeted with shouts of applause; not another word was listened to; in vain the more educated portion attempted to argue and reason. "There was no water, and that was an end of it." The motion was put to the vote and condemned as impossible and absurd by an overwhelming majority, and to this day the Free State is not supplied with telegraph. Whether the foregoing is a true bill I never had an opportunity of ascertaining, but I have no reason to doubt its full veracity. Another story, of much the same character, I can well believe. An old Boer living on his farm up country, but who had once seen the sea and the coast-line upon an occasion when he had once come down with his waggons to market, was told by some traveller that a steam-boat service was about being established between the Cape and Natal, asked, with the purest good faith, "Where they outspanned of a night?"

Vague rumours of how a party of diggers had made an attack upon a company of Delagoa Bay boys who were returning from the Diamond Fields with their earnings of a couple of years, and had been ignominiously repulsed and only escaped with

their lives, were also discussed in very guarded terms. If there was any truth in the report—which I do not think there was—the white men who were guilty of such an iniquitous affair ought to have been lynched by the other members of the community. It was very much such another affair which occasioned the murder of Hart; and when the various outrages by Kaffirs are traced to their source, it is generally found that the Whites have only themselves to thank for them, although the innocent are often made to suffer for the guilty.

On going to bed I took very good care to take with me an additional supply of blankets; but I was more acclimatized and less tired, so did not feel the cold at all disagreeably. Next morning, after breakfast, I bade good-bye to my host, and set off for Leydenburg, and I could not suppress a feeling of anxious fear for the little community I was leaving, so far away from succour, and exposed to the attacks of such powerful enemies. The day was wet and windy, and the road lay through a gloomy tract of broken boulders and sterile wastes. About noon the sun broke through the clouds and the rain passed away; I off-saddled at one of our camping-places on the way from Leydenburg, and to all appearances no waggons had been on the road since, for the tracks of our wheels were still quite distinct. I had been looking forward to again looking down upon the Sabie valley from the same point as we had previously had such a splendid view. All was changed, however, and I scarcely could recognize it as the same place. The murky atmosphere had

driven down the clouds, and instead of seeing the valley stretching away for miles below me, filled with winding streams and numberless breaks and kloofs full of many tinted trees and flowers, it was filled with white fleecy clouds, with here and there the tops of the higher peaks just breaking through them, and looking like black rocks in the midst of a white foaming sea. While I was standing gazing down, the sun, gaining more power, pierced through the masses of nebulous matter, and allowed strips of the sides of the hills, clothed with green bush, to peep through, and lighten up the view. I could have stayed where I was for hours, watching the ever-varying effect of light and shade; but I had still a dozen miles or more of my journey to perform, and I wished to be in before darkness set in at all events, and there is not much light after six o'clock in the north of the Transvaal during the winter months. The white tents of the 13th regiment, and the red coats of the sentries, were a very welcome sight to me, and gave Leydenburg a very homelike appearance as I cantered down the long hill at the foot of which the township is situated. At Messrs. Henwood and Roseaveare's store I found several friends, and received a most hearty welcome back from Mr. Roseaveare, who was himself there, and also from Mr. Shepheard, and others, who had been growing anxious for our safety after so long an absence and no news of any description from us. I found a large budget of letters awaiting me, and had the next two days well occupied in answering them.

Postage comes to a heavy item in the expenditure of any large Transvaal firm. Letters to England cost 1s., and to other parts in proportion. As letters from England to the Transvaal only cost 6d., it seems rather hard that the people living there should have to pay double for all the letters they send away. The expenses of bringing a letter in must be precisely the same as that attending a letter being sent out, so there does not appear to be much reason for the different tariff. The inhabitants naturally hoped for improvement in their postal arrangements when the country was annexed by the British government, but at present there is no indication of any change for the better, and the Transvaal has still to be content with a weekly communication with the other colonies.

Every day fresh reports of disaster and cattle lifting were brought into the town, and almost daily detachments of the mounted police, and any volunteers who were willing to join were despatched to attempt to recover the stolen beasts, and punish the thieves. A farmer, by name Maclaughlan, had 280 cattle carried off, and was unable to recover a single head of them. A few days after an impley of some 400 Kaffirs had the impudence to make a raid upon a farm only two miles outside the town, and carry off with them over 400 head, besides several horses which were out at pasture. This was too much to be borne, and eighteen mounted men set off in hot pursuit. On the second day they came up with the Kaffirs, who after one volley, in which they killed one of their pursuers and wounded three others,

turned tail and bolted, driving off the cattle in every direction. Some they managed to drive off helped by the close nature of the country, many more they stabbed with their assegais, and the volunteers only succeeded in bringing back with them 180 oxen and four horses out of all that had been stolen. Three companies of the 13th Light Infantry were stationed at Leydenburg, for the protection of the town; every day farmers treked in from the surrounding country to avail themselves of the safety afforded them. These outspanned inside the lager which was situated close to the camp, and pastured their herds as close by as they could find grass.

Armed patrols paraded the town at night, and every householder had full instructions given him as to his proceedings in case of a night attack. Several ladies I knew slept with pistols under their pillows, and I have no manner of doubt that they would have used them to good purpose had occasion arisen for them to display their valour.

One evening, just as we were sitting down to dinner a great scare was created by a man, who had been sent on a message to the camp of the Diamond Field Horse, returning back to the town with the alarming news that on the other side of the ford, at the extreme end of the township, he had seen a party of mounted Kaffirs, who had attempted to seize him. The capture of the horses of the volunteers the preceding week gave colour to his otherwise improbable statement, for mounted Kaffirs had been seen in all directions since the seizure, and the Kaffirs are too clever to let such an opportunity of lifting cattle as

their possession of so many horses afforded them slip by without taking advantage of it. A patrol of mounted police, backed up by a party of the 13th, were sent to reconnoitre, but returned shortly without having seen a sign of either Kaffirs or horses, and the man's story was put down to his alarm.

During the night, however, when all quietly-disposed people were asleep, suddenly two shots rang out sharp and clear, and without doubt proceeding from the centre of the town. In an instant the alarm of "The Kaffirs are here!" was spread from house to house.

The scare earlier in the evening, although proved false, had infected people with a sort of nervous excitement, which made them all the more ready to believe the worst now. Presently the tramp, tramp, tramp of the soldiers came down the road, and all were expecting the sounds of firing and the shrieks of the Kaffirs every instant to pierce through the still night air. The orders given to each head of a house to remain inside, with all its occupants, until warned to come out, and for every man to be ready to defend his own house, were, however, remembered and well carried out. Not a man disobeyed, and there was neither confusion or alarm in the streets, whatever there might have been in the houses. All anxiety was soon put to rest. The soldiers were heard returning; and as they passed each house, the reassuring intelligence was given that it was another false alarm, but this time a far more criminal one. A man, either from mischief or malice, had deliberately fired off two barrels of his revolver in the

street, without any cause or reason. He had either not attempted to escape, or if he had was unsuccessful, for he was apprehended by the picket and marched back to the camp of the 13th. Arrived there, he passed the night in the guard tent, and next morning was delivered over to the civil authorities. A considerable amount of interest was evinced in his trial, which took place during the morning; but as the evidence was quite clear, the case did not take long to settle, and the offender was mulcted in a very heavy fine of, as far as I can remember, about 40*l.*, for having so disturbed the peace of the community.

In the evening of the sixth day after my arrival Woodward came in with the waggons. He had not had casualties of any description, and the horses and oxen were both well and strong, and fit for an immediate start, which I was myself anxious for, as every day the danger increased of the township being so closely surrounded by Kaffirs that it would be impossible for a waggon without an escort to make its escape. The oxen, too, which had to be driven some way from town to pick a scanty feed, ran a daily chance of being lifted by some passing band of Kaffirs. The waggon had undergone such severe work since it had left the waggon-maker's hands, that just for the sake of making sure I again sent it to the yard to be thoroughly overhauled. Very little of importance needed doing to it, and it was almost as good as when it started on the trip after a few repairs had been effected. I passed my days in riding out with the officers of the 13th, sometimes taking a gun on the chance of a partridge, duck, or

small bôk, but oftener making journeys out to inspect the scenes of recent attacks on the farms from where cattle had been lifted, &c. As the officers were expecting orders almost daily to move to the front, they determined upon giving a dance before leaving, to mark their sense of the civilities and kindness received from the inhabitants of Leydenburg. It was no easy matter to secure a room ; but that difficulty was at last settled by Mr. Stafford Parker, the former President of the Diamond Fields, giving up his house for the occasion. All Leydenburg was in a state of intense excitement during the preceding few days, and the stores were all turned inside out by the ladies in efforts to match this colour with that. The gentlemen were almost as nervous about their apparel; for in such far-away places a man does not think black clothes of any sort, and much less dress clothes, a necessary part of his wardrobe. Personally I had no garment which could by any possibility do duty in a ball-room, but I was able to borrow from one of the regiment dress-clothes which were a sufficiently good fit. The night of the ball arrived; and unfortunately the afternoon had been very wet, which made the various paths to the ball-room very muddy, and awkward for the ladies with satin shoes and trains. From the camp we drove down in an ambulance waggon drawn by eight mules, and it did as well as any private omnibus. The house in which the dance was to be held had a broad stoop, as a verandah is termed in South Africa, and this had been tastefully hung with crimson baize so as to form a long passage the whole length of the house. The dancing-

room was entered from one end of this promenade, and at the other was situated the supper-room. At the back of the house a tent had been put up, and this was used as a card-room for the recreation of those who did not devote themselves to the worship of Terpsichore.

Here there was also a plentiful supply of "square-face" and "three star," to satisfy the wants of those to whom tea, coffee, and lemonade were not sufficiently stimulating beverages. By half-past eight o'clock the guests had mainly arrived, and very soon dancing commenced to the strains of a piano, cornet, and triangle, played by three privates of the regiment. No one could have believed it would be possible that ladies living so far from shops and fashions could have been dressed as tastefully and well as those who presently appeared; and several might have been suddenly transported from an English ball-room for any difference one could detect in their toilettes.

The men were not so happy, and every possible description of black coat was represented, from a frock-coat to a short-tailed jacket. There were very few dress-coats, but the only wonder was that there were any at all so far away from a tailor's shop. All the ladies were gloved, so it was not of much importance, as far as comfort was concerned, that several of the gentlemen were minus those articles of attire. The music was very fair, the floor capital, and dancing was carried on with the greatest spirit until supper was ready, and even then the dancing-room was never entirely deserted.

It was far into the next day when the party broke up, and there was not one person present who had not thoroughly enjoyed herself or himself, as the case might be ; and the only regret of the evening was that we were obliged to leave off at all, and that we should separate so soon.

The very next day to the dance two companies of the 13th started off to the front under their major ; leaving only one, with Captain Cox, to defend Leydenburg.

This created much dissatisfaction in the town, as one company was not considered a sufficient protection for the most important place, and indeed the only town, throughout the whole unsettled districts. It was an unpropitious day for a start, as the rain poured down unceasingly. The wind blew directly in the faces of the men as they marched along, almost freezing the blood in their veins, and they were afforded no protection by their drenched clothing. To make matters worse, the transport waggons selected to accompany the force were very slow and unmanageable, and the soldiers had continually to halt and dawdle about in the cold and wet till they came up to them. Captain Cox and I rode out to see the last of them some twelve miles out, where they were making their camp for the night, and a vastly uncomfortable place it looked too—high up among the hills, exposed to all the wind and rain, and nothing to look out upon but black rocks and deserted hill-sides.

Woodward had left me some days previously for Newcastle by the direct route, passing Lake Chrissie.

Going this road instead of round by Pretoria over a hundred miles is saved; but I was of necessity obliged to visit Pretoria before leaving the Transvaal, so very unwillingly we had to say good-bye to each other, and we never met again while I was in the country. I was not, however, without a companion for my journey, as Mr. C. Shepherd had made up his mind to accompany me to Pretoria by the slow, but comparatively pleasant ox-treking, rather than take the post-cart, and endure two days and nights of extreme hardship and discomfort. Two ex-volunteers, friends of his, were also anxious to proceed on the same journey, and they too joined my company. By way of precaution I got a rifle and ammunition from the Government store, by the Landroost's permission, for one of the ex-volunteers, so that we might all four be well armed in case of any collision, the probability of which was more deeply impressed upon us every day by all whose advice we asked. To start was a case of "must" with me, for my oxen were daily losing the strength they had gained below the Berg, and in a very few days more would not have been able to move away at all. On the day of leaving I went to the magazine to pick out a rifle. There was in it a very large assortment of different kinds of obsolete rifles, which had been sent at various times, and any quantity besides of useless ammunition, as none of the cartridges were intended for the rifles that had been supplied. There were also some magnificent tusks of ivory, a present from Secocoeni to the Queen. They were the largest tusks I had

ever seen, and each one weighed more than a man could carry.

We had purposely not announced the time of our departure to the boys, so that they were taken unexpectedly by surprise, and had no time to object, when just before sundown, at the time the oxen were driven in to the kraal, we ordered them to be inspanned, all the impedimenta packed up, and the waggon made ready for an immediate start. I had made my adieux earlier in the afternoon, so there was no delay in setting off; and just as the sun disappeared behind the hills, the whips cracked and we were again on the trek. We had been assured that our chief danger, if danger there was, lay within twenty miles of the town. It was known that bands of Kaffirs were stationed upon all the hill-tops round Leydenburg, and the fear was that one of these might notice our exit, and make an attempt to carry off the oxen during the night. By not moving till darkness set in we had as far as possible prevented our departure being noticed at all; but, to make sure of being completely safe by daylight, we treked on till the morning star arose, and had accomplished nearly twenty-five miles before we outspanned and turned in, for extreme cold made bed a most desirable place.

The oxen were chained up doubly secure to the dussellboom, so that they could neither be cut loose, nor the chains untied, without our awakening. Next morning while breakfasting, we observed two moving specks of red coming down the road which crossed a ridge of hills six or seven miles in front of us. By means of the glass I soon made them out to be

soldiers, and when we met they turned out to be two companies of the 81st and one of the 13th, on their way to reinforce the Leydenburg garrison. Their scouts had reported several large bodies of Kaffirs about the hills, so they were half expecting to be fired upon in every narrow gorge the road passed through. The major in command advised us to turn back with him and take the lower road to Middelburg ; but as there were four of us well armed, and with plenty of ammunition, we did not think that we had much to fear from any lot of Kaffirs who would think it worth their while to molest one waggon.

We came early in the afternoon to such an excellent position for outspanning, that we determined to go no further that day—a broad open space, with a clear stream running along one side of it, and fairly good grass. Not even a cat could have approached within three-hundred yards of the waggon without our perceiving it, as there was not even an ant-heap to afford any cover.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Secocoeni's Kop—Shells—A plucky Ride—Torture—Zuikerbosh
Kop—Dangerous Meeting—Mapock—The Annexation.

MY two new companions had only the previous week completed their service with the Volunteers, and were on their way to Pretoria to try and enlist again under more favourable terms. From them I had the first accurate description of Secocoeni's Kop. From the accounts in the papers I imagined it to be a sort of sugar-loaf mountain, but in reality this Kop is a huge succession of frightful peaks and ravines, intersected by deep clefts piercing into the earth, and with many artificial tunnels and connexions cut between the different parts.

The whole mass is formed of a black flinty rock, the sides of which are sharp as the blade of a knife. The difficulties in storming such a place are almost insurmountable. Even when one height has been gained with considerable loss of life—for the besiegers would be exposed all the time they were making the ascent—nothing important is effected, as a deep ravine has to be descended into and crossed over before the next peak can be gained. The first one has then to be left garrisoned, or else the Kaffirs will occupy it again before the soldiers have well left it. There are

hundreds of these sort of natural fastnesses, and, in fact, the kop is formed of a series of them. Each one is connected with the other by interminable caves and burrows, along the sides of which the Kaffirs have hollowed out holes like bunks, in which they can lie unseen, and fire from loop-holes, perfectly secure themselves, although a foot of solid rock only separates them from those they fire at. The kop is nearly thirty miles round, and on the far side has a drop of some 2000 feet below the level of the side nearest Leydenburg. Down this descent is situated a rich and fertile plain, full of Kaffirs and oxen; but in the plain the vapours and mists rising from the marshes of the Oliphant river are certain death to the white man, although not injurious to the Kaffir. No man who has not actually visited the spot can form any conception of the difficulties that lie in the way of subjugating Secocoeni. But events have proved that it is a far more arduous undertaking than the Government at first had any idea of. Three years ago the first attack was made by Boer Volunteers; they later on gave way to Volunteers sent by the British Government and under British officers. These were found unavailing, and regular troops, assisted by artillery, were despatched to the front, and one of the most efficient special officers was put in command; but when I was leaving South Africa the last news was that the troops had been obliged to retire from before Secocoeni's Kop, and at the present time no success of any kind has attended the efforts of the Government to defeat him.

When the artillery was first ordered to the front

many said that the war was as good as over, for the Kaffirs would never show at all in the face of cannon. For the first few days the shells did great execution, and established a great dread upon the Kaffirs, but then they became accustomed to them and only made fun of the gunners.

A party of them would appear upon the top of a rock a mile away, dancing, jumping, and waving coloured blankets or boughs of trees to attract their attention. The gun would be carefully aimed and fired, when the smoke cleared away the rock would be quite cleared of the Kaffirs, but they were very far from being injured by the shell, for the instant they perceived the flash of the gun each man would drop down behind the rock, and be safe in a natural bomb-proof gallery. The shell would then strike the rock and explode, instantly the boys would again emerge, pick up the pieces of metal, and the process would be repeated, much to the irritation of the artillery but amusement of the Kaffirs themselves, as well as of many of the colonial volunteers, who were able to give the regular soldiers the Job's comfort of "Did not we tell you how it would be?" One shell, however, scattered destruction right and left through the enemy, but not by the orthodox means. The shell fell upon soft ground, and for some reason did not explode. The Kaffirs for some time from their hiding-places watched it cautiously; but when, after several hours it still lay harmless, they mustered up courage and approached it. On examination, they found that it was coated with lead which would be

valuable to them for the purpose of making bullets. Accordingly, bearing it off in their arms, they carried it to their kraal. Making up a fire, they placed the shell in an iron pot over the flames, with the idea of so melting off the lead. While they were sitting, huddled up together round the cheerful blaze, after the manner of Kaffirs, and extolling their bravery and sagacity in capturing the shell and thus obtaining a supply of lead, the shell gradually became hotter and hotter, till at last the combustible matter inside was ignited by the heat, and the shell exploded, carrying death and mutilation in all directions. A boy, who was taken prisoner some days afterwards, carried the story to the camp of the volunteers, and great was the satisfaction felt by the gunners, who had vainly been attempting to give their insulting foes a lesson. The boy declared that over thirty Kaffirs had either been killed or wounded by the explosion, which was a larger number than all the other shells put together had killed.

Captain Clarke, who was in command of the volunteers, had established a reputation far and wide, both among his own men as well as the niggers, for his undaunted courage, and ignorance of what fear was. He gave one proof of his intrepidity only a few weeks previous to the time I arrived in Leydenburg. A company of the Zulu police were encamped at the foot of a hill occupied by Kaffirs, and had orders to allow no one to approach. One afternoon Captain Clarke as usual, rode up to visit them, and made the usual inquiries if they had seen anything fresh ?

"Yes," the men answered; "a party of the Kaffirs had come down the hill, bearing a white flag."

"And what did you do?" said Clarke.

"Oh, we fired on them as soon as ever they came within range, and they at once retreated back to the protection of the hill."

"Well, you did very wrong indeed," replied Clarke; "for it was a flag of truce, and you ought to have allowed it to approach, and heard what they had to say."

It was too late then, however, to blame the Zulus for what they had done, as they fancied, in obedience to orders; but the mischief was done, and it only remained to undo as much as possible of it. Leaving his arms behind, and telling Lanky Boy, his constant attendant, to do likewise, Captain Clarke turned his horse's head towards the Kop, and rode unmolested right into the heart of the Kaffir camp. In Kaffir, he apologized for his men who had fired upon the flag of truce without being aware of its nature. His apology finished, he turned his horse's head again, and was gone before the astounded Kaffirs had time to make up their minds as to what course they should pursue towards him. Not one man in a thousand would have dared to do the same; and it was only the perfect coolness and the self-control he exhibited which saved his life. No one knew better than he did the horrible fate of a man taken prisoner by Secocoeni's Kaffirs, and yet he never hesitated an instant in going among them.

A man going into the fight here does not pray that he may preserve his life, but that he may not be so

wounded and disabled as to be prevented from blowing his own brains out rather than be taken prisoner by these fiends. Several bodies were found from time to time, upon which the Kaffirs had worked their fearful torments. The particulars are too sickening for description, but out of some hundreds of cuts and wounds upon one body which an eye-witness described there was not one which would have caused death by itself, so there was no room to doubt but that the unfortunate wretch had been for hours the sport of their savage, inhuman passions.

There is a Boer still alive in the Transvaal who once witnessed the torture of two of his companions. They all three formed part of a commando, but were separated from the rest and surrounded in a rocky gorge. The lucky survivor managed to hide away underneath a ledge of rock, and escaped the eyes of the Kaffirs, but his two comrades were taken prisoners. The blacks proceeded on the spot to put them to death by every diabolical process of slow torture that it entered into their brains to conceive. The man concealed was obliged to look on, and was himself every instant expecting to be discovered and share a like fate. His agony of mind must have been almost equal to the physical suffering of the other two, and the two or three hours of dread suspense turned his hair a silvery grey, although only a young man, and the very mention of the place was sufficient to drive him almost into a fit for long afterwards.

During the night there was no necessity for us to take any precautionary measures ourselves, as the

boys, who had been thoroughly frightened by the reports of the soldiers, were on the alert all night through, and as they can see like cats in the darkness, we did not feel the slightest anxiety in trusting to them to awake us on the approach of any strangers.

Distrust of strangers is rather a curious feature of life in the wilds. It is a good maxim to expect every man to be a rascal, and to mean you no good, until you have good proof to the contrary. When possible it is always advisable to keep to one's own party, or, if necessary, be content with one's own company, rather than consort with strangers. This sounds a very inhospitable rule, but after all it is easily broken, and there is very little risk of a man ever repulsing one whom he would gain any advantage from either socially or otherwise. A man carries his character to a very great extent in his appearance, and fewer mistakes are made in physiognomy by those who live in a wild country than by dwellers in a civilized town.

We made a trek next morning to Zuikerbosh Kop, or as it is sometimes differently spelt, Segoe Bush, or Sugar Bush. On the way I shot a very fine specimen of the African turkey, which belongs to some species of ibis. Below the kop there stand the ruins of a farmhouse burnt during the last war by the Kaffirs. As there was a clear running stream to afford us a plentiful supply of water, we here outspanned, and I proceeded to skin the bird I had shot, leaving our mid-day meal to be prepared by the boys, but under my own supervision. Before the pots were

boiling on the fire two Kaffirs approached us from our left, carrying rifles in their hands, and armed in addition with bundles of assegais on their backs. While these were talking to the boys, up came two more from the other side armed in the same manner; then another pair appeared as if climbing out of the stream, and they were joined by several other pairs who seemed to rise up out of the earth. The boys, on being questioned through Jantze, said they were out hunting, and had not killed any bôk; but as they had no dogs with them their story did not "wash," as no Kaffir ever hunts without his dog. While these were being questioned, several more pairs joined them, making a total number of sixteen, all armed as well as we were, and evidently picked, strong men into the bargain. I did not require Jantze's evident looks of distrust and terror to have my own suspicion that all was not right; but on looking up at my companions from where I sat, leaning against the fore-wheel, and skinning my bird, I was reassured, for I saw that they were on the alert, and ready in case of accidents.

Shepherd, although apparently intent on making his pipe draw better, had within reach two loaded guns. One of the late volunteers, to all appearances fast asleep, nevertheless had one hand upon the locks of his rifle. The other had taken up his position upon a rock close by, from where he had an excellent view of the oxen which were quietly grazing a few yards off, and was occupying his spare time in polishing the barrels of my double-barreled gun, which I knew was like all the other fire-arms,

loaded and ready for use. My own rifle was leaning against the wheel by my side, and I presently took the opportunity of one of the boys asking me for some cooking material to get into the waggon, and, without being seen, slip my revolver into my shirt, and put another handful of cartridges into my pocket. The Kaffirs gathered together in a group some ten yards from us, and seemed to be waiting for something to happen.

Suddenly from round the turn of the hill up galloped two more Kaffirs, one of whom was evidently the chief of the party. The two new arrivals were armed only with rifles, but had belts of ammunition over the left shoulders. They rode up to the group and spoke a few angry words with them which Jantze could not understand, but a discussion followed, attended with much pointing and gesticulating. Then the one we supposed to be a petty chief asked Jantze who was "boss," and on Jantze pointing me out to him he came forward and offered to shake hands; but, warned by a glance from Shepherd, I ignored the offer, and continued quietly skinning my bird and taking no notice at all. Another council was held by the whole party, and then through Jantze they expressed their desire to be given some oxen, as also some powder, lead, and spirits. Our reply was forcible and to the point, but I fancy Jantze was too much disturbed in mind to give a literal translation. Anyhow, they were quite made to understand that they would get nothing, and that the sooner they made themselves scarce the better we should be pleased. There

were many angry glances and scowling faces at this message, and we four prepared every instant to shoot down the first man who either raised his rifle or laid his hands on his assegai. Again they requested us to give them "skoff," *i.e.* food, but this proposition we again declined to accede to. More angry glances, and a heated discussion, followed this fresh refusal; but I fancy that they saw that there was nothing to be got out of us without fighting, and that the chances were that they would come off second best, as we were fully prepared for them, and our superior quickness in the use of arms and coolness of aim would have made up for the overwhelming odds of nearly five to one. Suddenly, without another word to us, the two mounted men set off at a gallop, and the others followed as fast as they could run in the direction of our oxen. Snatching up our rifles we followed them, but seeing us coming they made no attempt to drive the oxen off, and were soon lost to sight behind the hills. As in all probability they had only gone to bring up reinforcements, so as to make more sure of their prize, we inspanned the oxen at once, and taking up the pots and pans with the uncooked dinner in them, we resumed our trek, hurrying on the oxen as fast as possible.

About twenty miles further on was a farm belonging to a Dutchman named Grobblers, where several farmers were collected together in lager. Here we knew we should be safe, so we never allowed the jaded oxen to rest until we arrived at the farm just as darkness set in. We received a very kind welcome, and were supplied with milk,

eggs, and bread. From our description of the head of the party, the Dutchmen had no difficulty in putting him down as a brother of Mapoch's, who was known to be on friendly terms with Secocoeni. It was a very providential circumstance that, instead of being alone with my boys, I had three other white men with me, or the Kaffirs would never have gone away without taking the oxen with them; but they had probably calculated on only finding one white man in charge, and were so taken completely by surprise.

Mapoch himself is a treacherous, cruel savage, at present on good terms ostensibly with the Government, but probably only biding his time to break out at a favourable moment and carry murder and rapine far and wide. His power is very much feared by all the farmers, as far away even as in Middelburg; one large farmer there commenced a new house, but left off until he was safe from any fear of an attack by Mapoch. This chief has some ten or twelve thousand able-bodied warriors at his command, and nearly all are well armed. His territories are in the very heart of the Transvaal, and at any time he may openly break out. In course of a few years it will be necessary to call upon this chief to disarm his warriors and give up the arms, and this will probably bring about another *little* war which will unsettle the whole of the country, and in which many lives and much money will be thrown away.

Now that the Transvaal has been annexed by the British, the question of whether the act itself was justifiable or not has no further importance, for what has been done cannot be undone without loss of prestige.

On the other hand, it has imposed very many duties on the Government, which at present there is very little inclination shown on their part to fulfil. The most important duty, perhaps, is to keep such an armed force as will give protection to the settlers from the tribes on the borders, as well as those living inside. There is no doubt that the expenditure needful for this will be enormous, and will have to be borne by the Imperial Government almost entirely; but yet this point ought to have been considered before the British flag was planted over the land. At present there is hardly any protection offered to life and property throughout two-thirds of the entire Transvaal, and in consequence the value of land has rather deteriorated than increased during the last two years, except in the vicinity of the towns. No one questions the fact that at some time or other our rule will be a beneficial change for the Transvaal; but the advantages as yet only appear very dimly in the mists of the future, and with good reason the Boer, who only looks to the present, can ask himself, "What good does British rule do me in exchange for the higher rate of taxes I am called upon to pay in support of this new régime?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

Middelburg to Pretoria—Blaubank Diggings—An undignified Appeal—Volunteers standing off—Miserable Trekking—Boers—Threatened Famine from Drought—Maritzburg—Conclusion.

WE had no further adventures on our journey into Middelburg, which we reached just seven days from the time we had left Leydenburg. The township was full of volunteers who had served their time, and were being sent back to Pretoria; but they were of a low class, and made the town anything but a desirable abiding-place, from their constant drunken brawls and nightly disturbances. Two of the oxen had been knocked up by the hard trekking away from Zuikerbosh Kop, and the bad grass had told very much on the others, which had the additional work thrown on them. In Middelburg I tried everywhere to buy two more pairs to lighten their labours; but the war, and the need of oxen for transport, had driven the price to such an exorbitant figure that I was obliged to do without them.

As we were all anxious to reach Pretoria I made a very short stay in Middelburg, not having anything there to keep me, and we were quite ready to start as soon as fresh supplies of meat had been laid in. It was the first time for many months that I had been obliged to buy meat, but there were no bôk

along the road, and therefore no chance of supplying the larder with venison. The grass became worse and worse as we advanced towards Pretoria, and the last three days there was hardly anything at all that the oxen could catch hold of. To make matters more discouraging, I was positively assured, by every one we passed on the road, that below Pretoria right down to Natal there was literally no grass at all, and that all transports had ceased, and any waggons that necessity obliged to go had to carry sufficient mealies or forage to supply their spans from town to town. I had passed through all the dangers of the last six months without ever having been laid up or disabled for a single day; but on the day we left Middelburg, when the journey was so nearly finished, I had my only accident in a most ignominious manner. While cutting a loaf of bread with my heavy hunting-knife, which had an edge like a razor, the blade slipped through the loaf, sliced deep into the flesh between the forefinger and thumb of my left hand, cutting through the sinew, making a very nasty-looking gash. There was too much blood flowing to attempt to sew the severed parts together, so I bound it up tightly with a wet bandage, which I kept cool and moist with constant supplies of fresh water. I had always been under the impression that a cut between the finger and thumb was generally followed by lock-jaw, and every moment expected to feel a difficulty in opening my mouth. After several hours had passed, and my jaws felt the same as usual, the alarm on that score was dissipated; but I could not take my hand out

of a sling for many days afterwards, and was quite incapacitated from shooting ; but there was very little to shoot at, as all the bôk had treked away to richer pastures, and partridges and coranne were very few and far between. We were seven days on the trek between Middelburg and Pretoria, making just a fortnight since leaving Leydenburg. A few miles out of the town we met several companies of the 80th, two companies of Carrington's Horse, and some mountain guns, on their way to Secocoeni's Kop, and from them heard that very active operations were intended against that chief, so that, if possible, he might be brought under, before the rains set in and horse-sickness commenced. All the officers in command were very sanguine of complete success, and were confidently looking forward to returning covered with laurels before three months were over, but I expect that they soon had their high expectations dashed to the ground.

The name of Carrington's Horse has been given to two entirely separate classes of soldiers. The original Carrington's Horse were men picked out of the 24th Regiment, and, under the instruction of Captain Carrington, of that regiment, turned into what were called Mounted Infantry. A second lot, who are often confounded with these, consist of volunteers, who were raised and brought to a high state of efficiency in the war of 1876-77 by the same officer, who himself at this time was second in command of the forces against Secocoeni, and who had the reputation of being able to do more with the Volunteers than any other officer in South Africa.

We treked right through the main street of Pretoria to our former outspanning ground, close to the English church, and had an admiring crowd round the waggon inspecting the buffalo, koodoo, and sable antelope horns, which were hanging outside. That night, the first time for many months, I had a really choice dinner at the "European Restaurant," which had been improved and increased since I had last been there. The whole town was in a great state of excitement. Every day fresh rumours were brought in, either from Secocoeni's Kop or from down south. Another great topic of interest was the newly-discovered Blaubank gold-diggings, which were situated some sixty miles from Pretoria, in the direction of Potchefstroom. These diggings had been first worked many years ago, but were deserted as not paying. A farmer, however, living on the spot had lately discovered several very good specimens of alluvial gold near the former site of the diggings. The Gold Inspector had proceeded there, and, with other miners who flocked to the spot, had also found sufficient quantities of the precious metal to warrant him in declaring the digging a paying one. Much scepticism was displayed by many who had known the place in former days, and feeling ran very high on the question, as several of the leading townsmen were interested in the movement; and at last the genuineness of the finds became rather a dangerous subject of conversation in public places, as any man whose credit or interest was concerned might personally resent any doubts that were shown in the matter.

The Government was in desperate need of volunteers, but all who were not friendly to it declared that they went the wrong way about obtaining them. All the papers were full of alluring proposals to join the forces, and enlisting depôts were formed all over the country, but yet very few volunteers came forward. Every day men whose term expired refused to re-enlist under the terms offered, and the companies at the front were daily diminishing in strength, and all the best men leaving. Huge placards were stuck all over the walls of Pretoria, and distributed broadcast, of which the following is a specimen :—



VOLUNTEERS WANTED

For the Front,

and

GRAND ATTACK

on Secocoeni's Town.

LOOT AND BOOTY MONEY.

Better Prospects than the Blaubank Gold-diggings.

Pay awarded, £5 before leaving.

SAME RATIONS AS A GENERAL.

ENROL BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

and quite incapable of defending yourselves. You allow the Kaffirs to overrun your country unchecked, and they are continually in a state of ferment. Our borders are threatened through your helplessness. Through cowardice or through inability to resist, you give in to the audacious demands of native chiefs, and so destroy the prestige which ought to belong to white men; and in consequence, in our dealings with them, we find that they are far less easily intimidated, and have a far higher opinion of their own prowess than they otherwise would. In consideration, therefore, of these points, we are determined on taking your land away from you and ruling it ourselves. If you resist, so much the worse for you, as we have you entirely at our mercy; we can cut off all your supplies, and can also march up half-a-dozen regiments to shoot you down. If you give in we will manage all your affairs for you, keep the Kaffirs completely under our thumb, guarantee you complete safety from them, as our troops will always be at hand to protect you, and we will give you largely increased facilities of commerce, and many other advantages as well." The Boers made no armed resistance to our demands, not because they believed all the fair promises, but because they had the sense to see that opposition would in the long-run prove futile, and serve as an excuse for taking all their liberty and privileges away from them.

These men, now they were being solicited on all sides to enlist in the Volunteer service, and leave their land and houses to endure hardships and

dangers, to assist the Government which had taken away their country from them, naturally refused to render them any service whatever, and must have chuckled inwardly at the plight its policy had brought the Government to.

In Pretoria I sold off every article out of the waggon which I could possibly spare, as it not only made it lighter, which was of great importance with my jaded oxen, but I also obtained three times the price for my surplus stores that they would have realized in Pieter Maritzburg. I was sorry to part with many articles which had often contributed to my sport and comfort; but as I was leaving South Africa almost immediately, there was no further use for them. From Pretoria I only took with me two boys, my driver Jantze, who had been with me from the start, and one forelouper who had come to me from Woodward. The other three boys, who had come with me from Leydenburg, found situations in the town, and were very willing to be left behind. My forelouper had been anxious to come to Pretoria in order to draw some three pounds due to him from the Government for services under Captain Clarke; but through not having complied with some formality he was unable to obtain his money, and in consequence went away with a very firm determination never again to work under Government employ. The grass near the town was very poor, and the oxen, although doing no work, were daily looking thinner; so on the fifth day after my arrival I again inspanned and treked off to the South, amidst the farewells and kind wishes of many who had been good friends to me while I was in the Transvaal.

I could not yet use my left arm, so had to take a large supply of meat for the road, as I should not be able to shoot any bôk. The grass as far as Heidelberg was better than I had been led to expect, and judging from it my hopes revived of making a quick run through to Maritzburg without losing any more of the oxen. Every day after leaving Heidelberg however, it became scarcer and scarcer. To make matters worse, a very strong hot wind sprang up which blew almost continuously, bearing along with it huge dust-clouds, which filled the waggon with dirt, and made everything uncomfortable and disagreeable. A lovely open blue sky overhead seemed quite out of place with the hurricane blowing down below. A north-west wind is always the most disagreeable that blows in the Transvaal, for it has travelled over thousands of miles of the hot dry sands of the desert, and by the time it reaches the Transvaal has become a scorching blast, charged with minute particles of salt sand, which inflame the eyes, irritate the skin, and make life under the circumstances anything but pleasant. The oxen too, very soon felt its effects; their eyes became sore, and their shins hot and rough. Three of the oxen were running loose, and one had died before I crossed the cis-Transvaal and entered into Natal. Just over the frontier, and about twelve miles from Newcastle, there was some very good grass upon the top of a hill close to a canteen and store. As I arrived there on a Saturday afternoon I determined to hold over until the Monday, so as to give the oxen the full benefit of the improved feed. While

there, half-a-dozen waggons loaded with ammunition bound for Leydenburg under a convoy of the 80th, arrived from Newcastle and outspanned. The officer in charge, who had only joined a few months previously, was in a sore fix with the Boers who owned and were driving the waggons. These refused to trek more than ten miles a day, at which rate of progression the stores of the party would be consumed before they arrived at their destination. The Boers, to make matters worse, only treated his orders with derision and his entreaties with stolid indifference. Under these circumstances he was obliged to ride back to his starting-point, and fetch out one of the regular transport officers, a colonist born, who ought in the first place to have had charge of the expedition, as no stranger could possibly be expected to know how to manage Boer waggon-drivers, who are of all men I ever saw the most pig-headed, lazy, and obstinate.

In the cool of the evening, while I was sitting smoking with the owner of the canteen, a fine herd of cows was driven past us by the boys, and kraaled in separately from the rest of his stock. Upon my inquiring the reason, he replied, "Those belong to my daughter."

"Is your daughter married, then?"

"Oh no, but she is going to be very shortly; those are her marriage portion."

He then explained to me the system pursued by the Boers and colonists in general to make provision for their children. Whenever a girl is born, she is given a heifer by her parents. All the offspring of this heifer then belong to the girl; but to pay the

expenses of their shepherding and feeding, every second bull born of the original heifer or her descendants belongs to the parents. When the girl grows up to a marriageable age, she does not go empty handed to her husband, and often has a herd of several hundred head in her own right. If the original heifer dies before it has had a calf, the father replaces it with another out of his own herds. By this means the girl is no expense to her parents at all; for by the time she has finished her education she has enough cows to form a dairy, which she manages herself, and makes more than enough to pay her keep, by selling the supplies of butter, milk, and sometimes cheeses. When she marries the father is not called upon to provide any dower, as the girl has it herself, and so there is no sudden draw on her parent's means. The boys are not treated in the same manner. "Because," said the Dutchman, "if the boys had a fine herd of their own without having worked for it, they would become intractable, and would want to be off to the town to sell their oxen, and would soon become drunken, worthless fellows." The boys are first taught to read and write, which is quite sufficient learning for them, and then they are set to work on the farm. When they want to marry they are usually given a portion of the farm, and still all live together, occasionally buying more land, until gradually a little colony is formed. From this system of brothers all settling down near each other, one of the most powerful causes of the tendency in the Dutch people to deteriorate from their original high character and physique, has had its origin, for in many parts of

the Transvaal every family for miles round has so married in and in that they might as well all be brothers and sisters.

The physique of the typical Boer has entirely changed within the last fifty years. The men who drove out the Kaffirs before them, and with indomitable pluck and perseverance treked on and on into unknown wastes, were strong, sturdy, broad-chested fellows, averaging not more than five feet ten each. Nowadays the ordinary Boer is a tall, lanky, hollow-chested, stooping-shouldered lout, who looks as if he had been allowed to run to seed.

At Newcastle I again met Mr. White, who had been down there some weeks, and we had a long chat over the pleasant time we had passed together; and when we at last said good-bye, it was with every wish that we might again meet each other.

The remainder of my trek to Maritzburg had very few pleasant incidents connected with it. The grass grew daily less and less, until there was in parts absolutely none at all, and the veldt was as bare of vegetation as an asphalted paving. Forage was very seldom procurable, and when it was, fetched such an exorbitant price that it was impossible to entirely feed the oxen on it. Several times I paid 4s. for a bundle weighing about seven or eight pounds; and as each ox would easily eat two at a time, and look very little better for it, the expense of feeding them was more than they were worth. They had, however, been such good servants, that I could not let them starve; and as they would not eat

mealies, there was no help for it but to give them the forage. The roadside was lined the whole way down with carcases of dead oxen and horses, and in many places along my route vultures were sitting alongside, too gorged with flesh to be able to move. Hardly a day passed without one of my own poor oxen falling out, too weak and footsore to proceed, and I had to leave it to take its chance, for any delay would have been fatal to the whole span. But it gave me many a heartache when I thought of the poor beast's probable fate.

Farmers in general were all on the verge of ruin, and famine was threatening the colony, unless rain soon came. The crops were withering, and the live stock all dead or dying from starvation. Corn and flour were daily going up in price, and the large requirements of the Government made it probable that soon prices would be at famine rates.

Nothing was now talked of but the chances of an immediate Zulu war; and from the manner in which the Government were buying up oxen, waggons, horses, forage, and other provisions, all over the country, there was little doubt that they had at last made up their minds to force a war upon the Zulu king.

Early in October my waggon once more outspanned on the top of Howick Hill, and when I presented myself at the Castle Hotel my good friends there for some time could scarcely believe that I was before them in the flesh, but right cheering were their hearty greetings on my safe arrival.

I stayed there only one night, and next morning took the post-cart into Maritzburg, leaving the waggon in charge of Jantze, to follow on during the day. In Maritzburg I was received as one risen from the dead, and the bank had refused to honour my draft because they had received such trustworthy reports of my having been killed several months back. As I knew that my letters home would have prevented any anxiety in their minds, even if the rumour had reached England, it was rather a source of amusement to me than otherwise. It is extraordinary how rumours will spread about uncontradicted; for when I arrived at my London club, the hall-porter almost jumped out of his box, and for some time was unable to speak to me for astonishment, as a gentleman, and a member of the club, had been kind enough to tell him that he had himself seen me lying dead in the Transvaal.

I thoroughly enjoyed the three weeks' complete rest I took in Maritzburg while disposing of the waggon, oxen, &c.; and was very sorry when, at last, I was obliged to bid farewell to many kind friends I left behind there.

My passage was taken by the next following steamer of the Orient line, which now touch at Cape Town on their way to our Australasian colonies, and my departure admitted of no postponement. A month later Table Mountain disappeared from my view as I stood on the deck of the s.s. "Aconcagua" to see the last of a land which I shall ever remember with affection; and my heart

was full of thankfulness for the benefit I had derived from the South African climate, and the never-to-be-forgotten hospitality and sympathy I had been treated with during my sojourn there.

THE END.



